

RETREAT

ISSUE No.9

The Magazine with insights & inspirations to nourish your mind, your heart and your soul

In this Issue

SIMPLE IS BEAUTIFUL

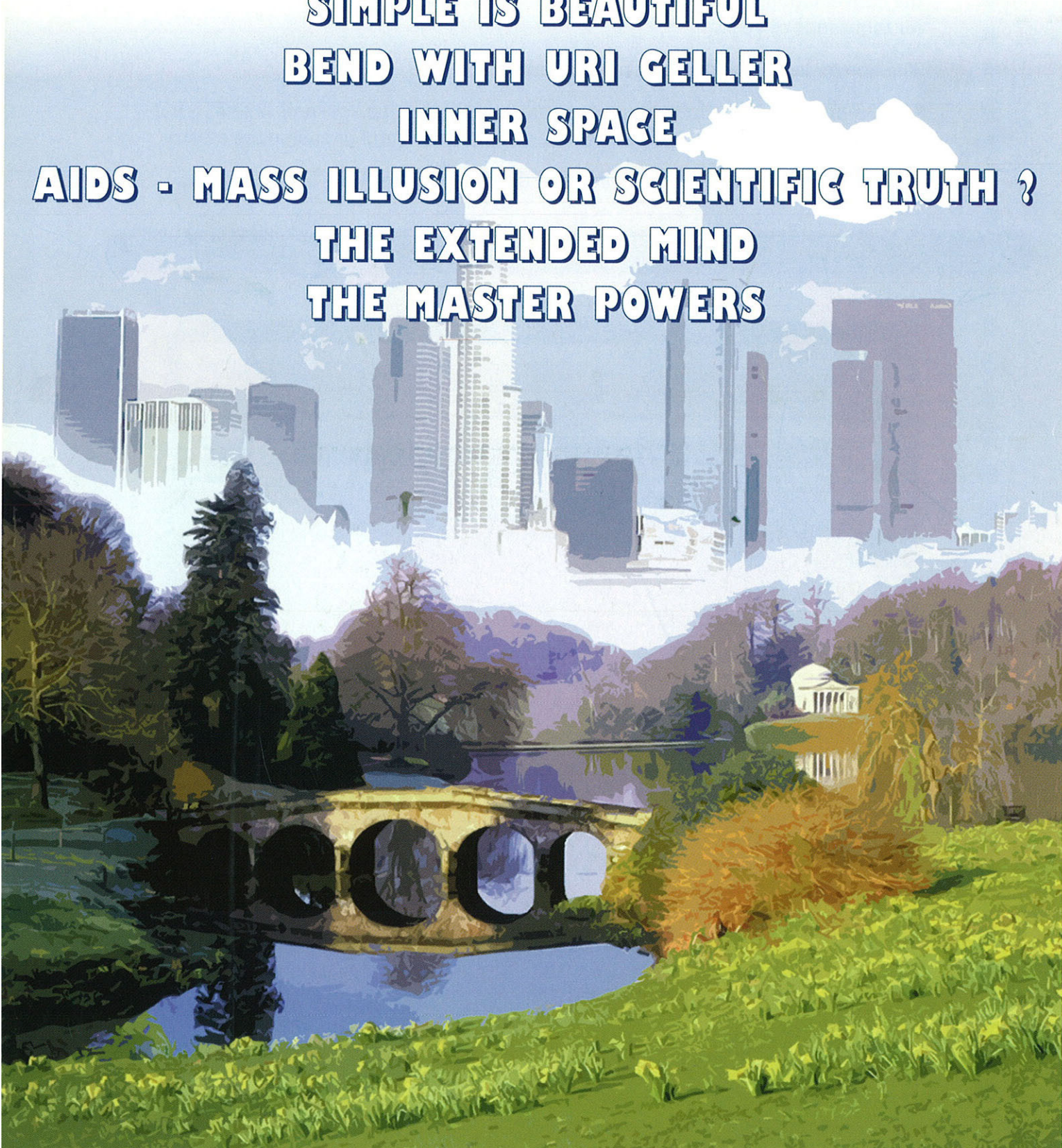
BEND WITH URI GELLER

INNER SPACE

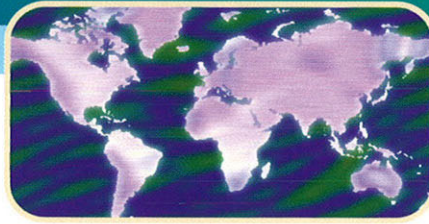
AIDS - MASS ILLUSION OR SCIENTIFIC TRUTH ?

THE EXTENDED MIND

THE MASTER POWERS



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Unlikely.

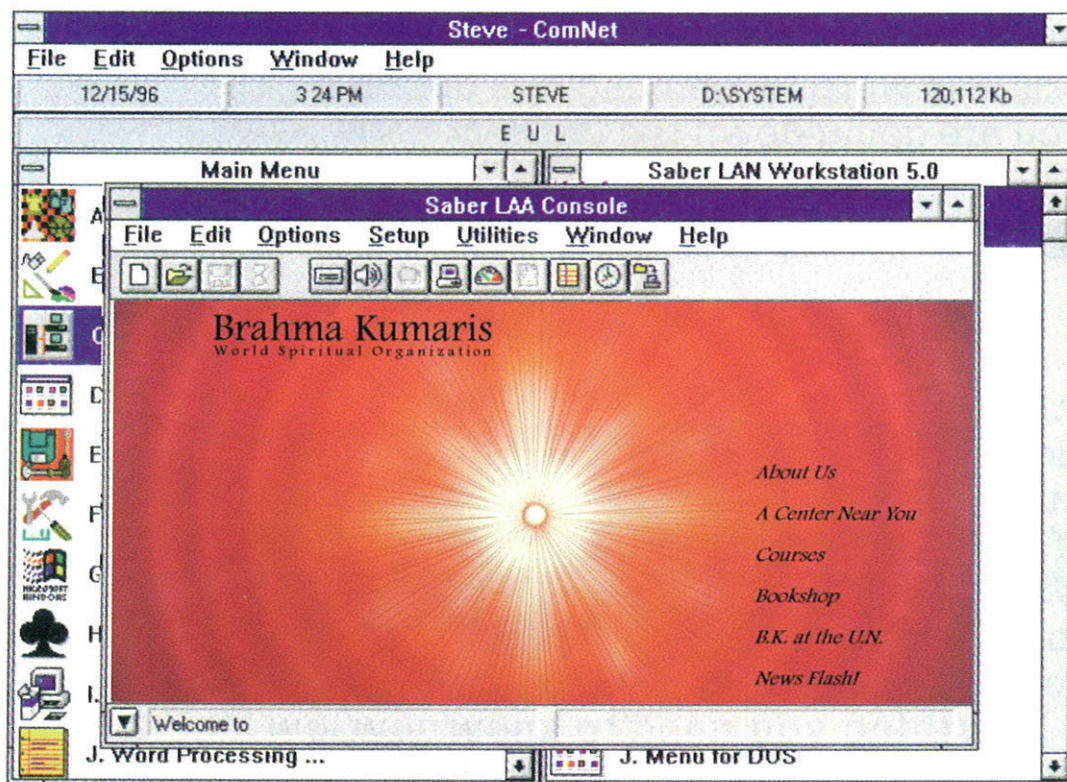
But you can now find
'the soul' on the
Internet.

Speculation about the human soul and its true nature has occupied
the conversations and meditations of philosophers and religions
for thousands of years.

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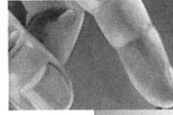


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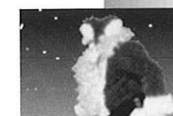
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ISSUE No.

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The Paradox of Power

Every great leader knows that real power does not derive from position, prestige or pay. Dictators do not have real power although it may seem otherwise. Nobody loves a dictator no matter what he promises. Companies can appear to have financial muscle but this power is mostly based on greed, and greed is a weak force carrying its own demise.

Real power only comes when it is given away. This is the paradox of power. In the context of our relationships the first step to empowering another is simply to accept them as they are. Allowing them to be what they want to be. In an organisational context empowering others begins with giving responsibility and granting authority. These are gestures of trust and respect and result in the return of the same, plus commitment and eventually loyalty. Loyalty has no price, and when it does appear to be purchased the absence of integrity and self-respect in both parties creates a fragile and powerless relationship.

These intangible forms of energy - trust, respect, commitment and loyalty - are the stuff of real power, earned and not commanded. If it is misused it disappears; if depended on it drains away. While an astute and experienced leader knows this, managers tend to forget. We are all managers and potential leaders.

Power is an interesting idea. It is nothing more than energy with a purpose. And everything is energy. In the context of human relationship its effective use will depend on a third factor, motivation or intention. The study of energy is the basis of science *and* spirituality. Both meet in the universe of Uri Geller. In **Bend!** Uri describes how science attempts to monitor and measure how he empowers molecules (physical energy) in a spoon to change their relationship with each other using only the power of his mind (mental energy). In **Thoughts on the Omega Point**, Stephen Fulder reflects on his observations that the energy of the universe appears to be running down in ways unnoticed by those who prefer the perception of progress. Rupert Sheldrake describes in **The Extended Mind** how the power of one look can influence whatever or whoever is seen, while the seventh session of the Foundation Course in Meditation, **The Master Powers**, describes the mastery of personal spiritual energy.

Energy is everywhere but in few places is there authentic power. However, we all seek it at some level or other. May your search be fruitful.

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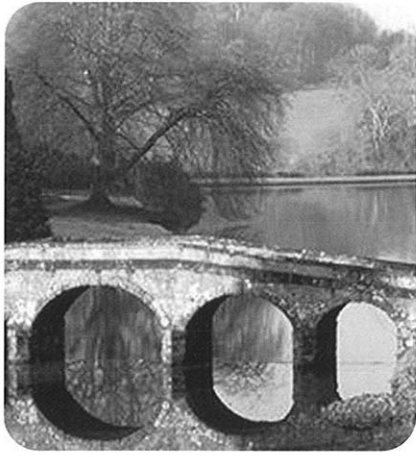
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Simple is Beautiful





When I first came across the phrase ‘care of the soul’ in Plato, medieval Christian writings and the books of C.G. Jung, I had no idea that it would become a window for me into a new way of imagining all those things we have hitherto placed within the grasp of psychology. As so many writers point out, the ‘psych’ of psychology is the soul, and yet in the psychological thinking so characteristic of our age we have turned the soul into an object of analysis. We have largely overlooked its mysterious and spiritual qualities.

Apparently, the narcissism of our time runs so deep that our very idea of soul has shifted. It’s much more typical these days to speak of the self. Many try to give the self depth and resonance by redefining it, but still the very word betrays a narcissistic concern. Popular psychology seems preoccupied with a ‘self-project’, a strenuous effort to make ourselves into something transcendent and fulfilled. We even imagine our close relationships as things to ‘work on’, to bring into workshops and to train on the latest jargon and techniques.

Care of the soul lies entirely outside this feverish effort towards perfecting the self on its own or in relationships. The word ‘care’ is a gentle word, far removed from ‘improvement’ and ‘cure’. It suggests ongoing, patient and loving attention, rather than heroic activism. Yet at the same time, it is not a sentimental notion. Care usually requires courage, wisdom and endurance.

One of the key elements in care is nurturance. Ancient texts on the soul often speak of the soul’s need for those things that feed it and allow it to thrive. Given the strong-muscled activism of our time, we might easily pass over this idea of nourishment too quickly, for it suggests a radical turn in the way we could think and behave ‘psychologically’, if I may still use that word. Instead of trying to figure ourselves out, achieve higher awareness and consciousness, understand the influence of our personal past on our present lives and develop new forms of behaviour that promise happiness, we could simply

live the daily life in such a way that the soul is continually fed. Such a simple idea!

The soul is nourished by many ordinary things, which in many instances are quite different from the things that our activist, spirited minds consider worthy. For instance, the soul longs for daily doses of contemplation, for exposure to beauty, and for intimacy of all kinds. The mind may be satisfied and indeed thrilled with new understandings and new languages for experience, but the soul seems satisfied only with words, often ancient and well-used, that have depth and resonance, such as the language of poetry and song. The spirited element in us craves transcendence and wishes to ascend the ladder of perfection or understanding. The soul, on the other hand, goes down that very ladder into deep pools of reverie, dream, and fluid imagining. As we care for the soul, we become people of character, depth and wisdom. We may not be terribly informed or up to date, and yet we will have sat with thoughts and experiences for a long time, allowing their gestation to affect us profoundly. The contemplation enjoyed by the soul is not only through formal ways of meditation, but more characteristically through daily moments of pause and wonder - before a painting, at a shop window, during a stroll through the park, or in a moment of idle daydream.

The contemplative, receptive, caring attitude grounds us for the kind of relationships that satisfy the soul; relationship among human beings in relatedness to the world and to one’s everyday experience. It’s easy in these busy and too productive times to feel alienated from the very world with which we are fervently involved. We can be numb to the people around us, to the condition of nature and culture, and to our own deep desires.

Relationship requires a grounding in which we are attentive to our own thoughts, intuitions and emotions, not trying to figure them out mentally, but simply giving them careful notice. We can be intimate not only with another person, but with ourselves and our

“Finding it difficult to have a strong sense of identity in the midst of modern life, we insist narcissistically on our worth and we do everything possible to be seen and recognised. Yet paradoxically, the more we go this way the more we detach ourselves from our truth and our community,”
writes best-selling author
THOMAS MOORE.

world. This very intimacy - not an evolved 'self' or a 'successful relationship' - is what nourishes the soul.

One of the fundamental intimacy needs of the soul is for home and family. As children we may enjoy these experiences quite literally, though many children, of course, are deprived of them. As we grow older, these same needs and pleasures may be satisfied somewhat less literally. We may need to feel 'at home' in the work we do and in the neighbourhood in which we live. We may look for family spirit on the job or in various organisations. We may try to evoke remembered or longed for experiences of home and family in our own lives as parents or as single adults. These two significant forms of intimacy may also play an important role in our search for a soul mate, someone with whom we can feel profoundly at home and in family. Two or more people being together doesn't necessarily lead to intimacy.

Nurturing the soul may sometimes require an intimate place and setting. It isn't always easy in this highly functional world to find a place where we can have a truly intimate conversation. A debate or mutual diagnosis does not usually have the soul qualities of intimate conversation. There is a tendency these days to use psychological jargon when we talk to each other, or worse, partners in relationships pathologise each other, gaining a degree of power by considering the other emotionally disturbed or unevolved. Speaking from the heart, with a degree of vulnerability and transparency, as well as safeguarding our own and the other's privacy and integrity, invokes the spirit of intimacy among people. Returning to the theme of narcissism, we may see this symptom of our time as a signal that it is difficult to have a strong sense of identity in the midst of modern life. Driven by compelling narcissism, we may insist on our own worth and do everything possible to be seen and recognised. The trouble with narcissism is that it fails to appreciate the paradox whereby we become true individuals in community, and vice

versa, only when we are genuine individuals. It's typical for matters of the soul to revolve into paradox.

People often complain of loneliness and are puzzled that they can feel lonely even though they're surrounded by people. Clearly, to be surrounded by people is not to be engaged with them. We may respond to loneliness narcissistically by looking for the right people to fit our own needs, or by making the cure for loneliness into a 'self' project. We may even enter therapy or go to various group experiences with this kind of motivation.

An alternative approach would be to listen to the needs of the community around us. Attending and responding to the children, the old people, the sick, or simply the people trying to get along in our neighbourhood, may be the most effective and least narcissistic way of finding a way out of loneliness. Caring for the soul always involves a community aspect, and it is never a self-centred effort.

In recent days three unrelated people have told me how they suddenly felt a strong desire to do something about the tragic state of the world. Instead of just thinking about what they might do, or merely expressing their concern,

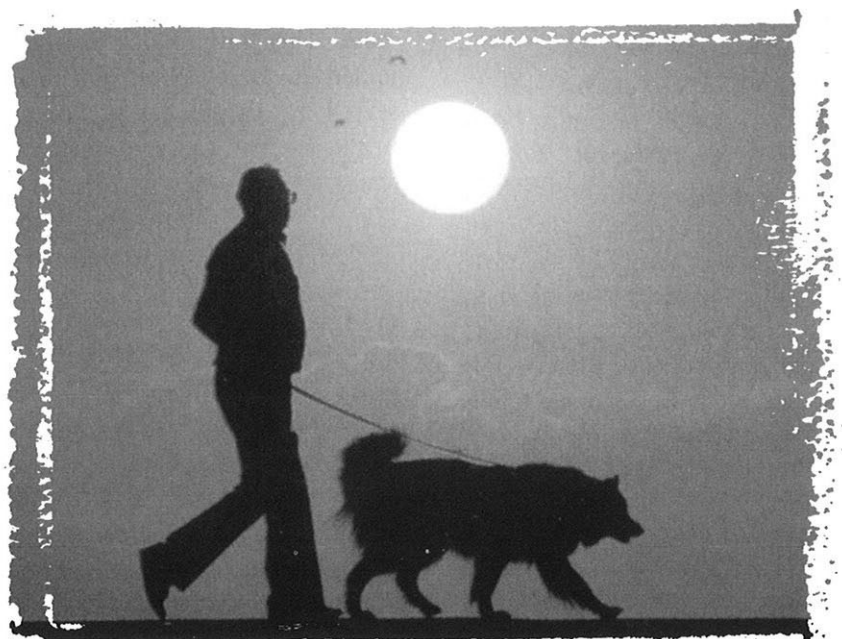


they took abandoned children into their homes. This is not a romantic solution to loneliness, for these people know they have taken on a life-long responsibility and limitation on their freedom of movement, yet they are indeed bringing out many latent talents in themselves and are necessarily engaged with a wide world of education and child-rearing.

The diminishing of narcissism in our attitude toward a spiritual and soulful life I believe would radically alter the 'New Age' and cultish ways that have now perhaps seen their day. More importantly, we could discover that the search for enlightenment need not always take the upward and shining route. Extraordinary revelations and the gaining of wisdom are also gifts that appear when we discover the bountiful paradox in which individuals and communities give birth to each other. We might also find, along with many mystics of the past, that the quest for transcendence and fulfilment is most richly satisfied when we find the rarest treasure of all: the most ordinary and simplest life possible.

®

Thomas Moore is an author who lives in Massachusetts, USA. His book, *Care of the Soul*, is published by Piatkus



Uri Geller tells his story
while bending a spoon
or two!



For over twenty years Uri Geller has been famous worldwide for his ability to bend metal and start broken watches with the power of his mind. He recently visited the Global Retreat Centre and made an electric presentation to over sixty participants attending the Inner Olympics Seminar. This is an edited version of what he shared that day.

BENDING!

I was born in Israel. When I was four years old I was eating soup in my mother's kitchen and I was lifting the spoon towards my mouth when it started bending and it actually broke. I thought everyone could do it, I didn't think there was something strange going on. My mother comes from Sigmund Freud's family, her name is Margaret Freud. She immediately attached it to Sigmund Freud that maybe I inherited some strange ability from him. As I grew older I

discovered that I could demonstrate this in school. I would fix broken watches and clocks, I would bend keys and I would do telepathy with children. I would even use it in school because I was a terrible pupil and I would focus on one good pupil in the class and I would know the answer. Teachers would know that there was something bizarre going on but it wasn't a trick so they never could catch me. They said, "How does he do it?"

Moving to Cyprus with my mother totally changed my life. It was during the trouble when the English were being killed by the Greeks and Greeks were killed by the Turks. It was here that I learned to be openminded

and started believing in my powers. Some day I would use them, but I didn't know how. Then I went back to Israel. I joined the Israeli paratroopers and served three years. I was wounded in the six day war and when I left the army I didn't know what to do. We were very, very poor. I used to live with my mother in a one bedroom apartment. I started modelling and saw myself in newspapers with all sorts of products, even underwear. One day a photographer had a bunch of keys, and I said to him, "Listen let me show you something." He held his key and I started stroking and it started bending. That really freaked him out and he said, "What are

you doing tonight? I have this party at home. Do you mind coming and showing what you do?" I said, "Yeah" and he said, "I'll even pay you for it". So I went to this party, demonstrated some of my abilities and saw how everyone was actually shocked. But they were also entertained and I felt a great euphoria. I started going to these parties three or four times a week and, as time went by, the parties became more prestigious. From photographers to lawyers, from lawyers to judges, from judges to generals and, one day, Golda Meir was in this party and I did telepathy with her. The next day they interviewed her on the radio. They asked her to predict the future of Israel. She said, "Don't ask me, ask Uri Geller." Now that

was the biggest plug in my life, coming from the mouth of the Prime Minister. So the next day the phones started ringing, big managers

and agents, promoters wanted to book me at big theatres, and I started doing performances. And exactly like today, I have no idea what I'll work or what I'll say. I'm just talking now because it's coming out of me. That's exactly what we did on stage in front of fifteen or twenty thousand people. I asked women to come up on the stage with rings and they would bend in their hands and I would do telepathy.

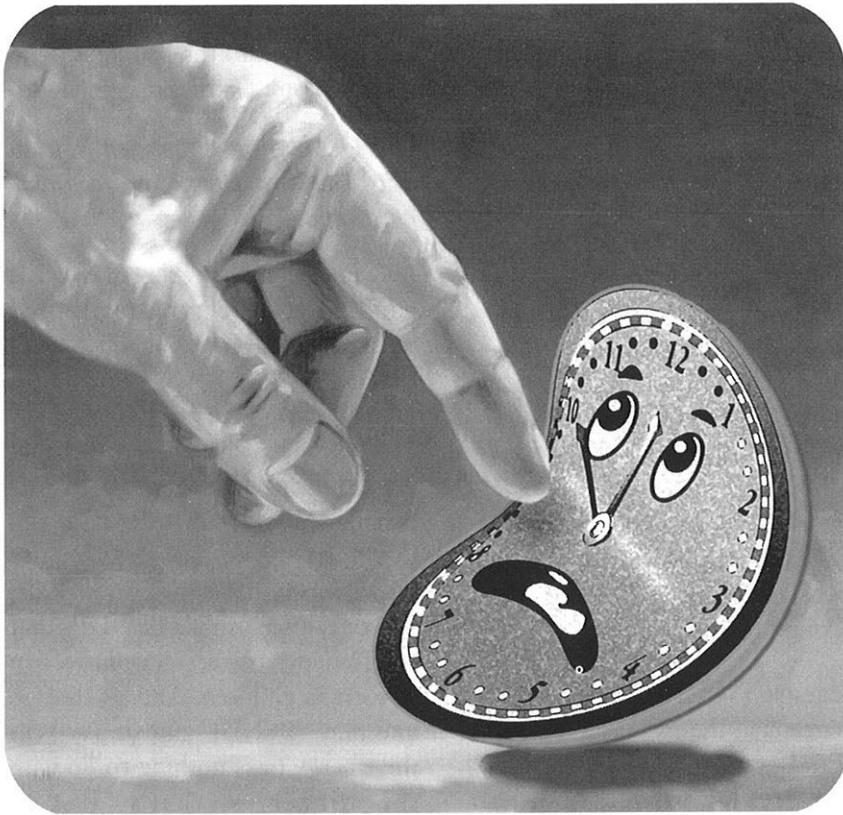
Then this thing went beyond Israel. Edgar Mitchell, the astronaut, heard about me and said that if this if guy is real, and not a magician, you have got to test him. Mitchell

sent a scientist, Andrija Puharich, to Israel to test me. So Andrija arrived with all his cameras and equipment and he was a very nice guy. He said "Look Uri, if you can do this under laboratory controlled conditions this will be very important for science". At that time I was almost finished in Israel. Everyone had seen me three or four times over, and the auditoriums started becoming empty and I ended up performing in night clubs. It was a terrible feeling from being at the top to suddenly being at the

bottom because I couldn't change my act. It was real, I wasn't a magician, a magician could change his act. I couldn't. I knew how to bend spoons, do some telepathy, fix broken watches, that's it. So I started doing these tests with Andrija Puharich. It really totally blew his mind because it was real and he saw it in front of his eyes. Then he said "Uri you've got to come back with me to America, to the Stanford Research Institute. There are scientists waiting for you there". I said, "Fine I've nothing else to do in Israel, let's go."

I did not know at that time that part of the experiments were actually financed by the American Defence Department, by an agency call ARPA (Advanced Research Project Agency). I went through these tests in shielded rooms and drawings were done in places far away and I moved things. It became so controversial because the papers started writing about this young guy from Israel being studied at the SRI. A paper, eight pages long, was published in Nature magazine. It became worldwide news. They validated my powers, but then the controversy began and I was attacked by magicians and scientists who hadn't even seen me, just read reports. Magicians started duplicating forks and spoons with chemicals, sleight of hand and laser beams and saying this is how Uri Geller does it. It became such a huge controversy that it fuelled the wheel of publicity for me and I was suddenly demanded by television all over the world.

In 1973 David Dimbleby invited me to do his show here in England. At the same time I was on the cover of New Scientist. They had diagrams explaining how I do it and it was a joke because one of diagrams suggested that I keep transmitters in my teeth. It was really unbelievable to see a creditable scientific magazine go so far to try to discredit me. I had to go to a dentist to prove that I didn't even have a filling. So on the David Dimbleby show, I was holding a spoon or a fork and massaging it gently, and I looked into the camera and said, "Now you people at home, quickly go to your kitchen and get your spoons and forks." Watches started ticking, house appliances that were broken for years came alive, and spoons and forks were bending. It was such a phenomenon that the BBC's and BT's telephone system blew up because so many people were calling in a panic, "My spoon is bending!" It was so incredible that I said to myself, "Wow, what a power I have. I can actually send my abilities and my energies through the airwaves." Then I did it through radio and all over the world, because everyone wanted to see and hear.



I did not know at that time that part of the experiments were actually financed

One day at UCLA, a doctor called Dr Thelma Moss video-taped me in a class of forty students. I said to some watches, "One, two, three, work". I left and went back to New York. The next week she asked her students to bring broken watches. She put the video in the recorder and lo and behold the watches started ticking, and I wasn't even there. It was through a video screening. She called me and she said, "You know, Uri, whatever you do it works. The video started the watches ticking." And that's when I discovered that basically we all have this power and all I was doing was acting as a trigger to the people at home. I have done this hundreds of times worldwide, even through magazines and newspapers - it always works.

So I started touring the world until I met the chairman of the board of Rio Tinto Zinc, which is a big mining company in England. He was a secret dowser and he said, "Uri there is more money in finding metal than in bending it." And he was right, because he taught me how to dowse, not with twigs but just by opening my hands over maps, and trying to find gold and oil. I started doing that very successfully and suddenly I became very, very wealthy because I found oil-wells for big countries like Mexico and big Japanese companies and so on.

I will try to demonstrate some of the things I do. I want you to be openminded, because I don't have a thousand people in front of me and I also don't have children here. If I had little kids here, they would stand next to me and they would help me. Children are more openminded than grownups and I have had this all through my years when children are around me their energy is involved with mine and then things happen.

(At this point Uri handed out some

spoons and forks to those present in the room).

I begin to stroke the spoon very gently, I talk to it, I stroke it on the very thin part because the thinner



the metal the easier it is for me and I say in my mind, "Bend!" In my mind I try to alter the molecular structure. There, I can feel it, and there is absolutely no heat. The spoon, and this is not an illusion, is becoming plastic. It is cracking and there is absolutely no pressure in my fingers. I just sort of loosen the metal and there is absolutely no heat. It is cold. Sometimes it happens to the keys of those who are around me!

A research institute actually photographed the metal before and after and you can actually see that the molecular structure does change. It is not the same as it was before.

This time I stroke the handle and I say "Bend!" See it is beginning to curl upwards. It is hard for me to do one after the other. It just bends upwards very slowly and continues to do so. This can also happen when I don't touch it.

(At this point the audience began to ask some interesting questions.)

Q. *Can you twist it?*

A. Very difficult. I have tried bending spoons that are made from wood or plastic, but never. Always

metal, all metals, gold, silver, platinum.

Q: *What about knives?*

A: Knives would snap suddenly. I don't do knives because it could hurt. Sometimes I stroke it and it will just shatter in half because they are tempered steel.

Q: *Does it help if you're not speaking?*

A: The more people I have in front of me the easier it is for me. I can speak while I do it. I just talk to it in my mind. I say "Bend! Bend!" and I can talk to the people around me, it doesn't distract me.

Q: *Has anyone ever given you an explanation that you felt was reasonable?*

A: I have three theories of what is happening, which you might find fantastic and bordering on science fiction.

1. The most believable one is that we all have this energy in our brain, in our mind, but it's dormant. And when I'm on television and I say, "Look kids, say one, two, three, BEND!" that excitement triggers this power in you, or in children. And so they go like that "BEND!" and it awakens this energy (it is nothing to do with the finger - that's just a psychological tool for me), it bends the metal. So we all possess this dormant power. Why do I have it? It is a mystery. I don't know although three things happened to me when I was young.

a. I was hit by something, I don't know if it was lightening, when I was five years old, in an Arabic garden opposite my house, a bright light shot into my forehead like a bolt.

b. I stuck my finger in my mothers electric sewing machine and I was electrified.

c. When I was six weeks old I was in a pram in my mothers tiny bedroom, and a British soldier shot a bullet through our window and the glass fell on me. Maybe that trauma, I don't know what it was, maybe that triggered something in me.

2. Going more far out, maybe this power is not coming from me at all, but I am a channel to some forces in the universe, some kind of vibration, frequency which I can tap into that automatically. I am a religious man. I do believe in God. I pray to God every day. I don't attach these powers to God. Though when I think of God in those infinite spaces, anything and everything can happen.

3. Now the third theory - don't get up and walk out. I do believe in extra-terrestrial intelligence. There is no doubt in my mind that we're being visited by UFOs. Why they don't land I don't know. Out of one hundred sightings, probably ninety-nine are just lights in the sky, but if only one sighting is real, then there is intelligence out there and maybe there is some kind of cosmic clown, a cosmic little extraterrestrial that escaped its parents, and it's playing around with me. That is a possibility too.



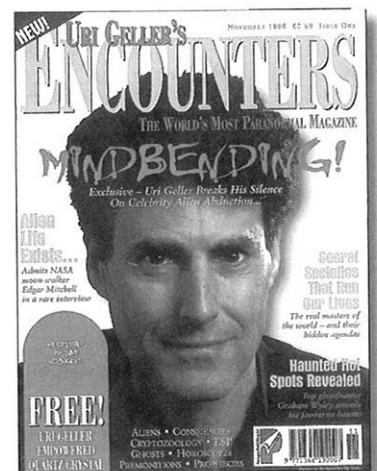
Q: *How do you stop it happening in circumstances where it would be very uncomfortable if something did bend and then break? Do you have control in that it only happens when you want it to happen or will things sometimes bend when it's very inconvenient?*

A: Yes, sometimes things happen when it's inconvenient and it's humourous, but never dangerous. I've had people walk off airplanes when they saw me on it, because they thought the wings might bend. Honestly, I've had pilots landing in Guam on the way to Australia because a woman freaked out, and she just walked out of the airplane. The pilot actually had to land to let her off. Never dangerous, always humourous and funny, but meaningful. You see even my coming here today is not a coincidence. No way. There is a plan above us. There is destiny and destiny is attached to a huge endless web of events and something will happen to someone here today, or to two or three or four of you, which will trigger something positive in the long chain of events.

Q: *What you have said is reminiscent of poltergeist cases where things have happened but very rarely is any harm actually incurred. Have you ever been associated with poltergeist types of cases?*

A: I sometimes wonder, "What is poltergeist and what is materialisation?" because things materialise near me fifteen to twenty times a year. In front of people things would suddenly appear or disappear. Edgar Mitchell and I were at SRI, walking in the corridor towards the cafeteria and suddenly we heard a clang on the wall and something fell onto the carpet. One of the scientists picks up this thing and it was an arrow, a little silver arrow. Mitchell looked at it and said, "You know this thing looks familiar to me". In the cafeteria I was having icecream and I put the spoon and icecream in my mouth and suddenly I felt something metallic in the icecream and I spat it out. It was a little ram's head. Mitchell took the arrow and put the ram's head on the arrow and said, "Guys, you won't believe what this is. This is my tiepin. But do you know what? I lost it five years ago on a beach in Florida." Five years before he met me! So these are the little events that happen that have a hidden meaning. And some day this puzzle will be revealed to me.

Today I'm very much involved with my magazine *Encounters*. Through it I am bringing fascinating true stories from the unexplained, the unknown and beyond. ®



Inner Space



Anthea Church steps inside and shows how 'letting go' reveals the eternal pulse which is you.

The mind grabs so avidly for sensation. It is the most amazing instrument of experience. Its speed is stunning, its subtlety invaluable. In its capacity to work on so many levels at once, it is more sophisticated than the technology it has itself created. It is just that maybe, like everything else about our planet, it has become overloaded, overused, even abused.

There is no hatred in my description of its franticness. I just see that sometimes it needs a rest, a kind of relaxing preview of death. And that rest comes from the awakening of the observing self.

Observe to where your thoughts go. Sit somewhere without obvious demands on your attention and watch. Can you fully enjoy the ridges of bark against your back as you sit under a tree, or are you still mentally with the unvarnished table? Do the thoughts come fast; do they, as it were, charge through your mind violently or file softly past? Yes, each time you look it will be different. That does not matter. The thing is that in the doing lies a birth. The birth of your observing self.

When something is born you look at it carefully. So look carefully at and attune yourself to this awakened observer. Who is it? Clearly, it is not any one of the thoughts you are having. Nor exactly is it what is having the thoughts. It feels more sensible, more far-reaching than that. Feel it as, if blind, you might pass your

hands across the features of a face to sense what it looks like.

This is a crucial moment, for it is with this part of you that all the rest of the work is done. This part of you - let's call it the inner eye - is really your friend, because when developed, it can stand quite distinctly apart from the rotation of thoughts and operate on its own.

Sit with this concept of the uninvolved self. It is a precious moment, for in it is the relief of space; a wider, more airy view. I am doing it now, for I too am still subject to the mistake that whatever I am feeling at this moment is the sum of who I am. This makes me dizzy, for too close to the swings and roundabout of moods, I become, as it were, a hundred different people in a day.

Maybe you will say: "But this observer is no virgin. It is already old; it already has its way of looking: disdain for worry, admiration for courage. It knows what it thinks." And this is true; it does. According to culture, background, belief system, occupation, so the eye will look. Never mind that. At least you have taken one step back from the part of you which moves like lightning; that is so connected to the senses that you have had ten thoughts about a face your physical eyes have merely glimpsed. At least you are out of that arena.

What then? Just stay with that inner eye, dogmatic and critical as it may be. It is the safest place to be for a person who wants to change, because it is the part of you that can learn. It has learned to believe certain things already and it can learn again. The mind which strains under the plethora of messages sent by the senses is not an easy faculty to educate. It is like trying to hold a fish in your hands. It slips and leaps.

In the observer seat, you question your life. You assess your mood, reflect upon your behaviour. And this type of thought draws you into a slower mode. It is a thought outside the arena of mere survival. It is where quality happens. It is also where a yearning for insight takes place. A sensitive inner eye will always be on the look out for solutions, new areas.

Regrettably, that inner eye also tends to close. When it closes, you return to that small, crowded area that is occupied by tasks. Some live permanently in that task-orientated mode. I imagine you do not. You move in and out of immediacy and reflection. And the reflection will take different forms. Sometimes religious, sometimes moral, sometimes personal, sometimes emotional. Sometimes it will be in the meeting of someone else's



intelligence that you move into reflection. A person's words will catch your attention and it is as though, for a moment, your inner eye flashes and brightens, because it has glimpsed a truth to which it deeply relates. But then the tasks crowd in again and the inner eye glazes over.

Not only that. The truth to which the observing self is responsive itself seems to fluctuate. Opinions change; beliefs crumble. Things that struck you as profound last year might this year leave you unmoved. So that observing, thinking self, that is so precious because it is educable, is also ephemeral. It too, like the mind, is subject to influence. For years and

years it can sing simply to the sound of someone else's tune. It is very rare to meet someone with perfect spiritual eyesight.

Given that, is there nothing that is stable and reliable?

What about your personality? People speak of you as a sound person, a kind person, a thoughtful person, sometimes selfish. Upon you, they stamp their judgment so that you stand not still, but rigid within the framework they have created for you. And you do it yourself. Again, with your own inner eye, you look and assess and think, 'I am a kind person', or 'I am over-complicated.' But will you always be?

There are those who say that we never change; we are what we are. I would lie down to die if I believed that were true, for I breathe the air of endeavour. As a school teacher, if I thought that, I would damage every child I met.

So, what does that leave you with? If you are not your thoughts, you are not what is thinking them, you are not what is judging them, you are not even exactly the person who acts upon them, what are you?

Close your eyes. Another birth. In the very, very quiet of a space that temporarily renders invalid thought, action, even personality, you will see something else. Not see, but sense with a faculty as far from the eyes as the moon is from the earth ... a pulse that is you. It beats gently, constantly, like the movement of waves, on and on; a spiritual heartbeat. And it is peaceful. It is stable. It is rhythmic. It is neutral, unblamable. It is as much behind the scream of a toddler as the whimper of someone dying. Call it the soul, even the soul of the soul - for is not thought, is not reflection, also a part of soul?

This part is both extremely experienced and absolutely innocent. The moment you touch it, you become ageless, for it has moved through time undamaged. You may have been many different things in your life, believed many different theories, but always, always in the background has been this pulse of peace that has no idea of time. Attune with that and you stand absolutely in the present, for though it is eternal, unlike the rest of you, it has no record of what you have done. It just is.

It just is and you just are. Just are. Not thinking, hoping, regretting, even feeling. Just being.

Only in quietness and a place of comfort, where you are not called to act out the parts you have assigned yourself, can you find this pulse. It may be in a familiar place or, as with me, it may, at the outset, be somewhere which does not speak back to you with memories. The Australian outback; that is where I think I first heard this pulse of peace. Sitting by a river in a place whose name I did not even know, a mile from a sheep station. No one had been to that riverbank for days, weeks, maybe months; and because of that I had free passage to that place in myself that I had not visited either, for years, maybe even lifetimes, births?

There is a moment for this experience. And when you come to call it back, it may take time. Your clothing is tight and, as you move among your friends and family, they throw upon you other garments that are heavy with different styles, colours, shapes. Take them off. Gradually, gently. Dust may fly up in your face, for these layers are old and have accumulated dirt, and that dirt is felt as thoughts. Then the clothes themselves will feel heavy in your hands. You will not want to put them down, for they will seem, though

inanimate, to have a life of their own that calls you. The mother's costume will call you to care, the employee's to finish the task, and, more subtly, the nice person that in reality is only another more deceptively elegant costume will urge you to be sociable. Here you need strength and a return to that moment of clarity with which you opened this book and said: "I want to stop".

Go on. Put them down. Lean your head back and listen, listen for that pulse. It is very, very quiet, but it is there. Beating on and on and on, oblivious. You cannot kill it even if a

... no one can touch this place in you. People may affect your mind; they may influence the way you observe life; indeed, they may help to shape your personality, but they cannot touch this place.

knife were plunged into your heart. Yes, at that moment your mind would leap in panic, your body would contort and buckle and maybe your reflective self might lurch out a question: "Why me; what have I done to deserve this?" But that pulse would just go on beating. Beat, beat, beat as the soul lifted out of the body; beat, beat, beat, as it started its journey towards another body.

If it can withstand stabbing, then it can withstand the hundred other things that make you cry. Of course it can. It is strong, indestructible. That is a beautiful thought, isn't it! That however delicate and inadequate you may have thought yourself to be, there is this unbroken peace in the distance.

When you have heard it once, you can

hear it again. And it is that constant return that will help you more than anything. Getting back to it is like clearing a road so that you can drive fast and easily. And if the road is blocked, fly! Seriously, this hearing of the pulse is blissfully unrelated to the obvious ups and downs of life. It is not conditional upon integrity although it may be drowned out by the noise of tough times. Even if you are tired, tense, taut, wired up, the fact is that the pulse of peace is still beating. It is there, whenever, whatever. Knowing that alone, you can reach it and breathe without sense of your body, for that too will go one day. So don't analyse the obstacles on the road, just get to the sea and breathe.

And once there, as nowhere else, you can relax. I am there now. At this moment that my pen moves across the page, I am far from the words it is forming. I am with that peace, for in that state, activity carries on independent of the momentum of will-power.

And it is here that, were my guru a physical person, I feel he might smile because I have reached him and we would be breathing together, standing before each other in the present and yet completely alone with our own eternity. For no one can touch this place in you. People may affect your mind; they may influence the way you observe life; indeed, they may help to shape your personality, but they cannot touch this place. You can reach across to each other from here but not touch. And that is a beautiful experience, because should my guru say as he stands in peace: "I should like you to stand without moving, without even breathing, for three minutes", my response might be: "yes, why not?", because standing here, I have no memory of time, of pressure, of any difficulty at all. ®

This article is an extract from Anthea Church's latest book *Inner Space*.

Neville Hodgkinson
reflects on the
continuing debate
following the publication
of his book

MASS ILLUSION or SCIENTIFIC TRUTH?

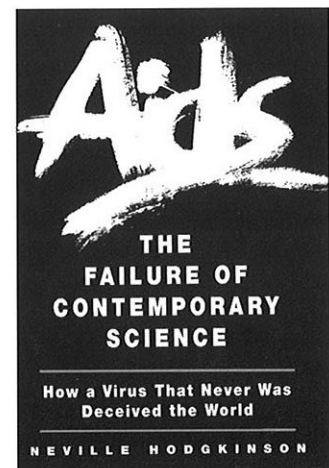
“What they say is not unreasonable, but it all hinges on whether what they did at the beginning is true.” So says Dr Val Turner, an Aids analyst and emergency physician at the Royal Perth Hospital, Western Australia, of the theory that a deadly new virus, HIV, is the cause of Aids.

In a book published recently I presented evidence that the original work claiming the isolation of an immune cell-destroying virus was inadequate, that the procedures which should have identified those inadequacies did not operate, and that a kind of censorship operated subsequently which grew more intense as the case for a reappraisal of the HIV

theory grew stronger. “HIV”, according to the scientists who I suggest have come closest to the truth, “is not a virus at all, but a collection of signals produced naturally by immune system cells when these have become over-stimulated and confused as a result of a variety of external factors. If we are to tackle Aids effectively we need to go back to square one in terms of pinning down its real causes.”

To reach such a conclusion, after 12 years of HIV-predicated research costing tens of billions of dollars, sounds to many like arguing that the world is flat - and indeed, such is the hostility aroused by the scientific challenge to the HIV hypothesis that I have been accused of doing just that. The book does have its friends, however. I was particularly grateful for a comment by Beverly Griffin, director and professor of virology at London’s Royal Postgraduate Medical School, who found it “thoroughly researched and well-argued”, and added: “The emotional response to the HIV story, especially by the scientific/medical community, never ceases to amaze.”

As well as describing some alternative theories of Aids causation, I have looked at the context in which the HIV theory arose, and tried to draw some lessons for the future. “HIV” came at a time of enormous growth in spending - much of it provided through central government agencies - on molecular biology, a field in which great technical advances are constantly taking place but which has so far yielded surprisingly few returns to humanity. According to some observers, there has even been a strong downside to some of this work, in



which simple-minded interpretations of genetic findings can all too easily damage people's lives. The danger becomes particularly acute when those involved "attribute excessive control and power to genes and DNA, rather than seeing them as part of the overall functioning of cells and organisms", says Ruth Hubbard, professor of biology emerita at Harvard University, in her cautionary book *Exploding the Gene Myth*.

Richard Strohman, professor emeritus in molecular and cell biology at the University of California at Berkeley, goes further. He says the half-century-old pursuit of genetic explanations for illness has actually slowed the pace of progress towards genuine understanding, and within medical practice itself - essentially, causing doctors and scientists to miss more and more of the wood as they peer more closely at the trees and the leaves.

If the foundation of a mass illusion over 'HIV' was a misinterpretation of biochemical events, its walls were built by a variety of interested players. The gay community desperately wanted to be able to blame a new virus for Aids, rather than face the likely contribution of the wild lifestyle characteristic of the Gay Liberation years. Furthermore, religious and political leaders, public health officials, charities and the media, found in HIV a ready-made, relatively uncontroversial target for expressions of feeling and morality: on the one hand, compassion towards the victims (although as John Lauritsen, a leading gay journalist was later to write, "To pretend that the behaviour of PWA's [People With Aids] has nothing to do with their being sick is to kill with a false kindness"); and on the other, a missionary-like condemnation of 'unsafe' sex, although the consumerisation of sex through condom campaigns risks deeply damaging effects on health and happiness. In addition, the illusion

served the recipients of the billions in research monies that the HIV hypothesis drew forth.

A few scientists have persistently raised their voices against the conventional view, withstanding considerable pressures to be quiet, and becoming outcasts because of their refusal to lie on the bed of conformity. They have sacrificed time, energy, professional standing, wealth and even health for the sake of their doubts, beliefs and convictions, but they have kept their



integrity, and they are the stronger ones today.

The HIV theory has not been without merit. It led to greater caution over the quality of blood supplies. It boosted 'safer sex' precautions, which, despite the 'condom culture' disadvantages, must have reduced the burden of disease in some, even if not in the way HIV protagonists believed. Furthermore, a novel phenomenon was identified at an early point in the epidemic, related to immune system over-activation and, potentially, to Aids, by French researchers headed by the Institut Pasteur's Professor Luc Montagnier, and by an American team led by Dr Robert Gallo, of the government-funded National Cancer

Institute. Their observations were a worthwhile achievement. It was the interpretation of those observations as signifying the presence of a new virus, and the conclusion that this was the cause of the collapse of the immune system seen in Aids, that went beyond the facts.

Since then the evidence against HIV has mounted to the point where for hundreds of doctors, scientists and Aids analysts around the world, the theory no longer fits the facts as they have now been established. A false paradigm of Aids causation is harming patients, the public, the public purse, and the image of two great professions. A new approach is urgently needed.

I have emphasised that the critique should not detract from our admiration for those many people who, touched by the plight of Aids victims, have given of their time, money and energies to try to help. That includes many scientists, doctors and other health professionals. Thousands have benefited from their generosity and care. At an individual level, in terms of both courage and compassion, the Aids crisis did often bring out the best in people, both patients and their helpers.

At a group level, however, there can sometimes be a certain hollowness in our motivations in which genuine compassion is replaced by a desire to feel that we are doing good. Human beings have a strong need to feel they have a place in the world. It is a need that speaks to our essentially benign nature, whose natural expression automatically earns us that place. But sometimes we become cut off from the goodwill that is our essence, and the need shows itself in weak instead of positive ways. Without realising what we are doing, we become dependent on 'giving' such that our actions are not genuinely altruistic, but instead express our neediness. In such circumstances the recipient of our 'giving' has to play the same game, and

becomes dependent on its continuation. This 'co-dependency' has been well described in terms of dysfunctional family relationships, but it can happen on a mass basis as well. It binds together large groups of people who need to be caring with other groups who feel themselves to be in need of that care. I believe the HIV story provoked just such a phenomenon, at an institutional level.

My book presents a new challenge: in the light of all the information now available, and through the eyes of a variety of observers, to experiment with different ways of looking at the syndrome, and see if there may not be great benefit in adopting a different explanation from the one we have lived with for so many years.

The book also favours a call by Professor Strohman for a new medical approach to diseases, that would permit fuller examination of the interaction between individuals and the environment. It would include molecular genetics as a crucial aspect, but recognise that genes are activated by the responses of the cells in which they sit, which in turn are governed by the stress-related behaviours of the organism (in our case, the person) as a whole. This approach would model the possible ways in which cells can adapt to stressful environments, "and

identify conditions under which the entire cell or tissue moves from positive adaptation to negative or disease state", as Professor Strohman puts it. I feel sure Aids will ultimately be understood within such a framework.

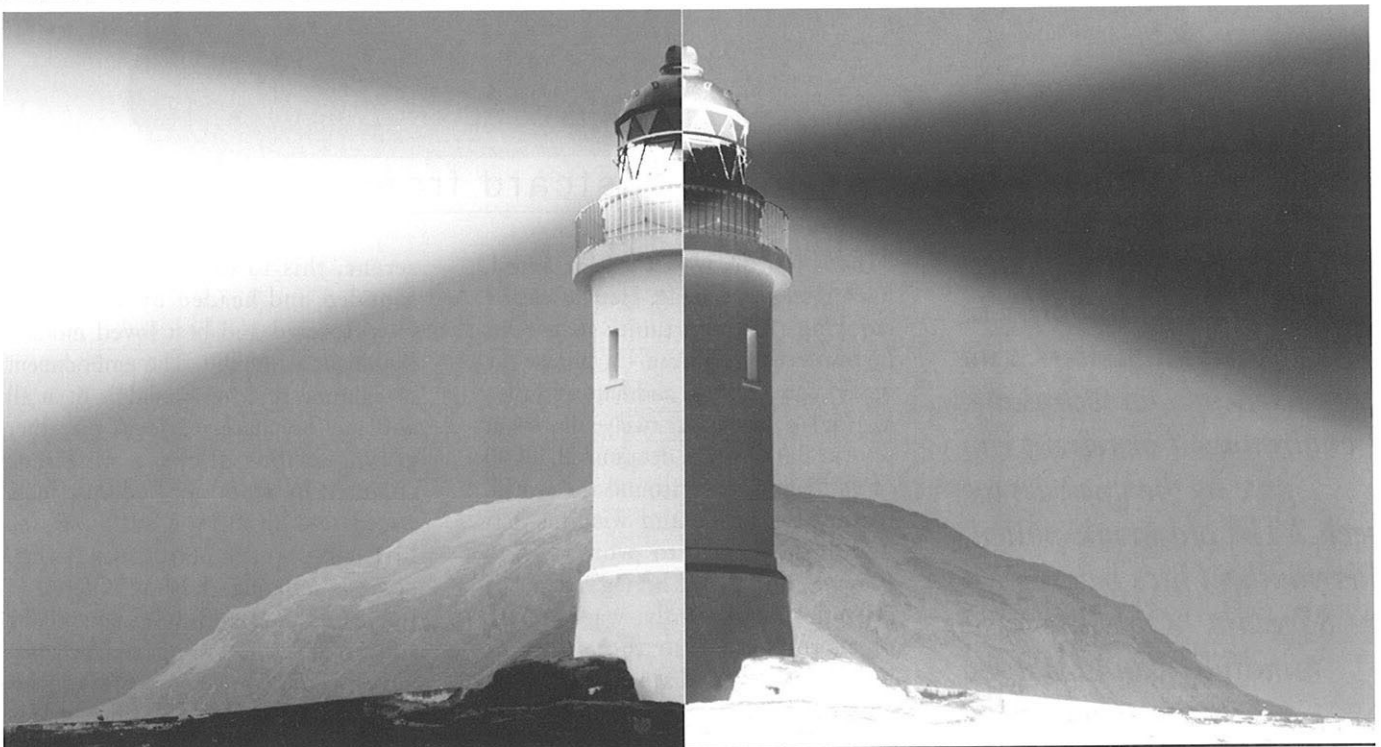
Perhaps when the illusions are shed and a clearer picture finally emerges, the enormity of the mistakes that the book describes will be turned to good advantage by the world of science, as a catalyst for a radical rethink about its observational methods, assumptions, and institutional checks and balances. Perhaps, too, that may include reconsideration of the way society treats the human beings we call doctors and scientists. A training that focuses so much on specialised knowledge, to the detriment of wisdom (the wider picture), encourages a disregard for the wisdom of the body - the self-adjusting, self-healing capabilities of organisms given respite from the pressures that induce disorder.

Finally, I have argued that the unrelentingly outward focus of science, by leaving subjective factors out of the picture, can compromise its objectivity, especially when it comes to tackling such an intensely emotional subject as Aids. The early investigators were understandably reluctant to get into

the emotionally murky and politically dangerous waters of sex and drugs. As a result they were prevented from seeing what was actually staring them in the face. Subsequently, as more and more money, power and prestige rode on the HIV wagon, it became increasingly difficult for all involved to climb off.

The idea that science offers a purely objective description of reality, and the failure to take the feelings of scientists themselves into account, is a far deeper and more damaging illusion than HIV itself. Perhaps a day will come when the great players in the HIV story will be looked back upon, not without affection, as tragic heroes whose mistakes pointed the way to a scientific reformation; one in which it became acknowledged that the processes of rational observation and inquiry must be tempered by a less rigidly mechanistic outlook - a change that can only come when we reverse our tendency to treat scientists themselves as soulless machines. Regardless of what we ultimately come to understand about 'HIV', I feel sure the benefits of such a reformation would extend beyond Aids patients, to the whole of medicine and indeed to all of society.

Neville Hodgkinson is a Journalist and Author. His latest book *AIDS: The Failure of Contemporary Science*, is available from the publishers Fourth Estate.





That's
just the
way it
is!

Rachel Flower sends a postcard from the East

*10 years ago in Thailand...
"There is no authority in
spiritual matters... no
teacher, no technique,
environment or retreat can
give us the answers we
seek." The old monk smiled,
his youthful face belying his
85 years. "Only life lived
mindfully can reveal the
answers we seek."*

"That's just the way it is!" he added, his bright eyes shining. He was clearly enjoying the opportunity to use his favourite catch phrase - a phrase we would come to love and hate and then love again during our twelve day silent retreat. But we were determined, all 90 of us hailing from around the world, to find the peace and wisdom that Buddhism seemed to promise. And Wat Suan Mokkh ('garden of liberation') apparently, was the best place to learn - so thousands of western travellers discover each year. Not only naturally beautiful and

serene, this forest temple was also founded and headed by Thailand's most revered and best loved monk - Buddhadasa Bikkhu. The embodiment of lightness and fun he didn't fit at all with my preconceived ideas of rather grave, serious abbots - an image conjured up from my Buddhist texts which said all life was suffering (the first noble truth) - Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, death is suffering.... But Buddhadasa didn't seem to be suffering at all! I supposed he must have picked up a few secrets in his monky life. Secrets I could certainly

use, that's for sure, and secrets I was prepared to brave seven hours a day worth of screaming knees, four hours of excruciatingly slow walking and a dinnerless evening for. (I did, however, enjoy the nightly chanting).

"The origin of suffering" said Buddhadasa, "is craving" (the second noble truth). Which is why the first two days at the retreat were particularly unpleasant - craving for a soft bed, a friendly conversation, a mosquito free night. But as the days passed my knees calmed down, my walks became enlightening, and I began to feel positively lightheaded. All that focusing on my breath, on the moment, had distanced me from my worldly worries and freed me to investigate the third noble truth: the extinction of suffering. Though I did become a little disheartened when I was told that such reward comes in totality only with Nirvana. Then again, if I could have half the joy of my wise teacher in the meantime, I wouldn't complain. He passed on two years ago now, no doubt with that same joy he had in life, but his teachings remain immortalised in his numerous books, and his image smiles down from many a household and temple wall. Open-minded and warm-hearted, he was a fine example of what Thai spirituality stands for, his ecumenical approach winning him many fans at home as well as abroad. Drawing from Zen, Taoist, and Christian elements as well as modern science and the traditional Theravada Buddhist scriptures, he emphasised the universal, natural humanness of Anapanasati (mindfulness using the breath as an anchor to cultivate awareness).

And to my relief, he was not one for extremes. Neither was the Buddha for that matter, who after years as a recluse renounced the extremes of austerity and sensuality, discovering that a more liberal, open-minded approach was the way to eradicate suffering.

This way he called the 'Middle Path' (the fourth noble truth) - a path of acceptance, self-responsibility and non-violence.

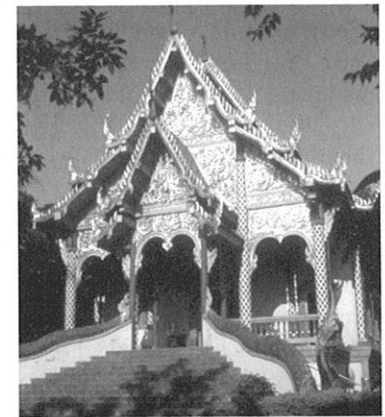
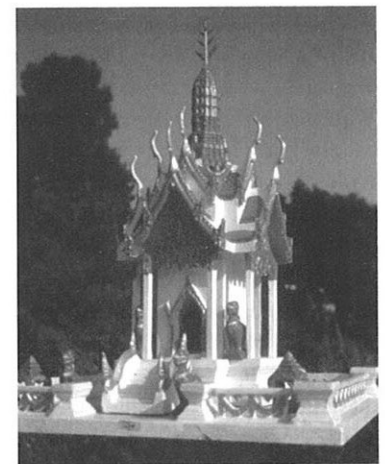
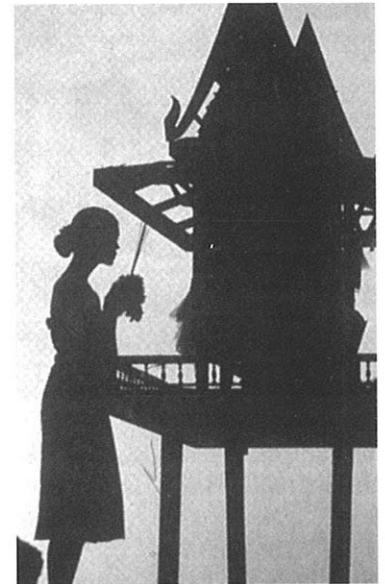
This attitude of acceptance could perhaps be summed up in the favourite of all Thai phrases: "Mai Pen Rai" - which, loosely translated, means, "Never mind," "It doesn't matter". (The second phrase foreigners learn after "How much?") and reflects the tolerance the Thais show towards other religions. Indeed Buddhism, Thai style, is a bit of a hotch potch. One strong influence is Animism, a practice in existence long before the arrival of Buddhism and still very much the way of life of many of the hill tribes inhabiting the mountainous north. This would explain the excessive use of good luck charms and amulets, channelling of departed spirits, and worship of Buddha images (Buddha himself never wished to be worshipped).

Spirit houses (looking rather like elaborate bird houses - an unfortunate mistake I made when first I saw them) are also a common sight. Ranging from simple to spectacular in design these 'mini-temples' house the angels that are to protect the building outside which their abode stands. Each day fruit, water, flowers and incense are offered to the angels, and whether or not you believe in them, it is considered extremely inauspicious to neglect this duty. So, many an ex-pat can be seen appeasing their angels - one woman even offered her yoghurt culture each day. She said the angels made it taste better.

China too has left its mark and with almost half the population of Thailand hailing from that great land mass, life wouldn't be complete without celebrating Chinese New Year and the moon festival, would it?

And Christmas? Why not?

Hinduism has also coloured Thai religion - after all, Buddhism came to Thailand from India. Such is the connection that some religious ceremonies are performed by Brahmin Priests, the statue of the Hindu god Brahma bestows his eight-armed fortune across the land, and many Thai names are derived from Sanskrit.





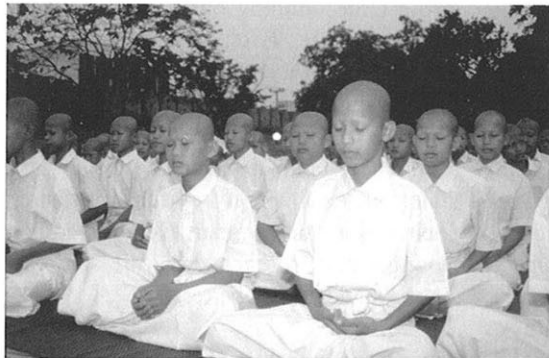
In both India and Thailand festivals are as important now as ever they were. In fact two most spectacular Thai celebrations are deeply influenced by Hinduism. Loy Krathong, "The Festival of Lights" is very similar to India's Diwali and takes place at virtually the same time of year. Waterways and houses are aglow with candlelight. Fireworks are set off and wishes are made. It is a moving sight to watch thousands of banana leaf floats drifting down the rivers and streams, each bearing a lit candle, flowers and incense, and carrying with them the hopes and dreams of their sender. Legend has it that these floats (very conveniently) carry away the sins accrued over the last year. Their release is also a gesture of appreciation to the goddess of water who provides their livelihood and tolerates their pollution.

The other major festival is Song Kran - similar in many ways to India's Holi, only water and not colour is thrown. A celebration of the Thai New Year - falling at the end of the long dry summer months - it is a time to invoke good luck (in terms of plentiful water supply) for the coming rainy season. It has 'evolved' (to the horror of older folk) from a gentle, dignified sprinkling of water, to what now amounts to a full-blown water fight - a four day long water fight at that. No-one is spared, be they mother, monk, or military. For these few days all are equals. Old scores are settled and plenty of new friends are made. After all, it's not every day you get to empty the entire contents of a ten gallon bucket over the head of a complete stranger.

But it's not only human beings that get splashed. Buddha images too get their

fair share of drenching, though for them it's a far more honourable affair. Mounted high on flower-adorned floats these graceful images are paraded outside their temple homes for their annual dousing. Jasmine-scented water is gently thrown over them in a display of respect and reverence, accompanied by traditional dancing and drumming.

Song Kran is also a time to honour the ancient tradition of respect to older folk and seniors in a lovely ceremony in which their hands are bathed in scented water after which forgiveness is expressed to juniors for any misdeeds done. This is very much in keeping with the Thai tradition of respect for age and position, and strengthens the bond between the generations.



Of course, Thailand, like so many other places in the world, has had difficulty balancing religion with materialism, and now instead of the temple being the centre of the community around which everything revolves, in some cases it has become little more than a glittering showpiece, the shopping mall now being the new place of worship.

Yet still, it is considered a great honour for a young man to be ordained as a monk. In fact 700 young aspirants were recently ordained in a mass ceremony to celebrate Chiang Mai's 700 years of history. It was a symbol of the people's efforts to

retain the spirituality and solidarity of Thai Buddhism in an age-old tradition that gives people a sense of meaning and hope.

Nuns too are feeling the call, and despite their disadvantage in terms of religious rights, they are proving that they also have an important part to play. Several outstanding women are stepping forward and have set up special teaching establishments where children from all backgrounds can, alongside their regular courses, come to understand the laws of nature and the value of contemplation. Increasingly popular, these places teach Buddha's way of compassion, moral conduct and non-prejudice.

I enjoyed my retreat (well, most of it). At least a little of Buddhadasa's wisdom had rubbed off on me - I had grown more patient, more tolerant (I could also walk really slowly now). I had really changed and I resolved to stay this way.

How innocent I was, for even as my plane skimmed the rooftops on its perilous approach to Hong Kong - my (hardly idyllic) home - I felt my determination wane. 6 million people on a postage stamp! How am I to cope? I knew then that I had barely even begun to scratch the surface of spirituality.

The 'mindfulness' to which Buddhadasa referred is something to be practiced at ALL times, in ALL places, not just peaceful Thai forests. My work was definitely cut out.

I smiled just as the old monk had done, "That's just the way it is!"

®

Rachel Flower is a consultant and freelance writer based in Chiang Mai, Thailand.



FIRST NOBLE TRUTH:

In short, life is suffering

SECOND NOBLE TRUTH:

The root of suffering is craving.

THIRD NOBLE TRUTH:

Extinction of suffering is the fading away of and detachment from craving (which ultimately means Nirvana).

FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH:

There's an eightfold path (the middle way) that leads there... namely:

1. RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

The first things to be understood are the four noble truths, and then the difference between merit and demerit; demerit can be summed up in five main no-noes: killing, stealing, lying, adultery, drinking.

And the understanding of impermanence taught by Buddha fits in very well with the wonderful habit the Thais have of living in the now. They love the 'sanuk' (fun, chit-chat) factor at work which some foreigners find frustrating at first.

2. RIGHT THOUGHT

Free from lust, ill-will and cruelty, and if thoughts are 'holy and turned away from the world', then all the better.

3. RIGHT SPEECH

Abstaining from lying, tale-telling, harsh language, vain talk. (A tough one for politicians, so I'm told.) "Even, oh monks," said the Buddha "should robbers and murderers saw through your limbs and joints, whosoever should give way to anger would not be following my advice." Showing any hint of anger means instant loss of face to a Thai, Hence the well-used phrase "Mai Pen Rai" (never mind) - through gritted-teeth-smile if need be.

4. RIGHT ACTION

Abstaining from killing, stealing, adultery, drinking. Many staunch Buddhists are vegetarians, but the majority of the people are not. As for the other three... well, real devotees do their best, (but whisky is cheap in Thailand).

5. RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

Without trickery, deceit, treachery, soothsaying, usury (another tough one for politicians).

Though there are monks who read fortunes, it is frowned upon by the Sangha (Buddhist authorities). Five other trades should also be avoided by a disciple: trading in arms, living-beings, flesh, intoxicating drinks, poison.

6. RIGHT EFFORT

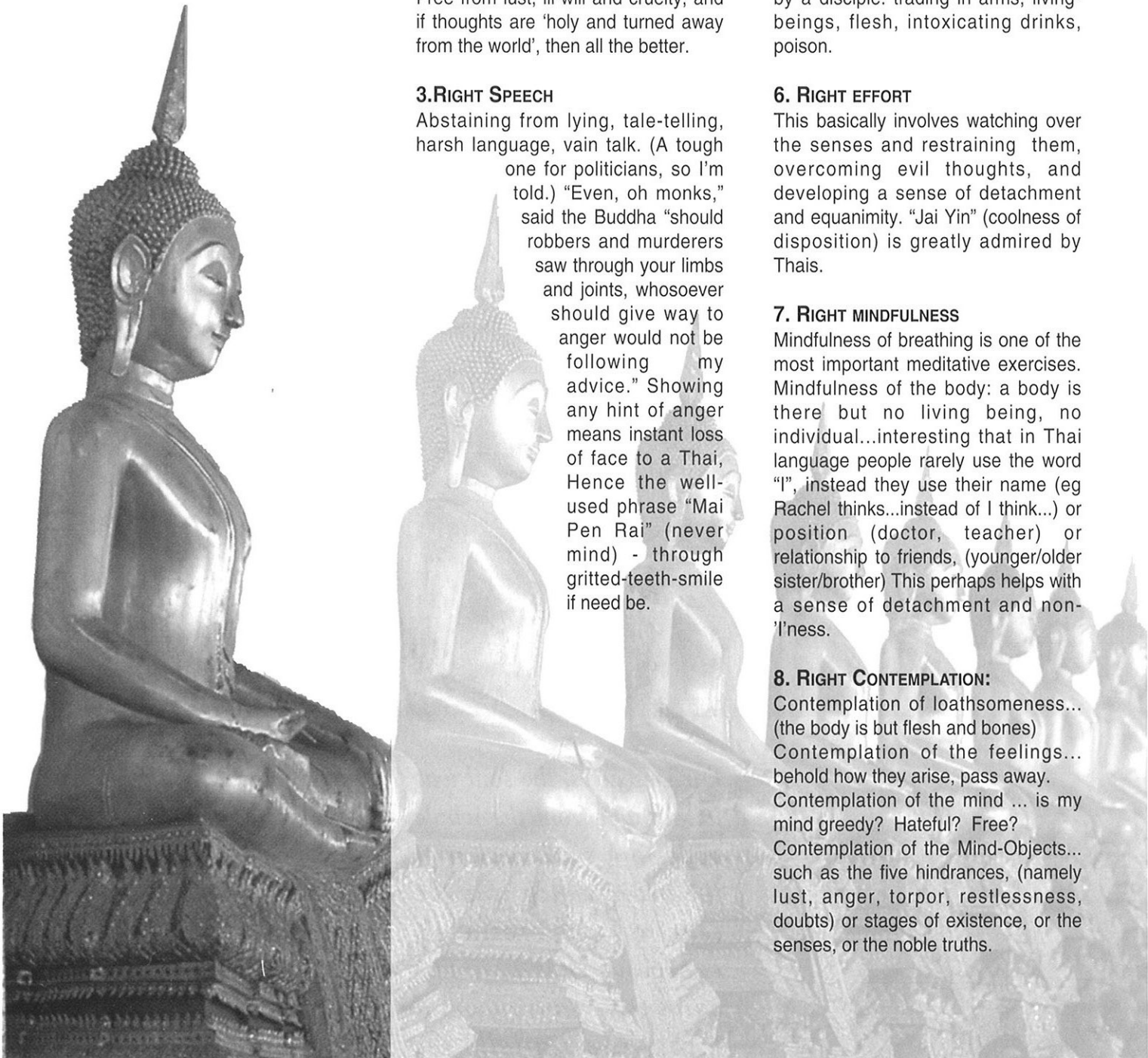
This basically involves watching over the senses and restraining them, overcoming evil thoughts, and developing a sense of detachment and equanimity. "Jai Yin" (coolness of disposition) is greatly admired by Thais.

7. RIGHT MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness of breathing is one of the most important meditative exercises. Mindfulness of the body: a body is there but no living being, no individual...interesting that in Thai language people rarely use the word "I", instead they use their name (eg Rachel thinks...instead of I think...) or position (doctor, teacher) or relationship to friends, (younger/older sister/brother) This perhaps helps with a sense of detachment and non-'I'ness.

8. RIGHT CONTEMPLATION:

Contemplation of loathsomeness... (the body is but flesh and bones)
 Contemplation of the feelings... behold how they arise, pass away.
 Contemplation of the mind ... is my mind greedy? Hateful? Free?
 Contemplation of the Mind-Objects... such as the five hindrances, (namely lust, anger, torpor, restlessness, doubts) or stages of existence, or the senses, or the noble truths.



The Extended Mind

Rupert Sheldrake
describes one of the
seven experiments that
could change the world



For Descartes, the soul was withdrawn from the whole body to a small region of the brain which was the seat of the rational, conscious mind. The currently conventional theory is essentially the

same, the only difference being that the supposed seat of the soul has moved a couple of inches into the cerebral cortex. This is the view which dominates our civilisation.

Of course, no-one knows how the mind influences or interacts with the brain. Materialistic philosophers deal with the problem by saying that the mind has no independent activity; it is just the brain. Our consciousness is like a kind of glow around the nerve endings; it arises from the brain but it doesn't do anything. Interactionists say there is a mysterious something that interacts with the brain, but don't know how.

In the Natural History Museum there is an exhibit called, 'How can we control our actions?', a model of a man with a perspex window in its forehead. Inside his head is the cockpit of a jet plane full of dials, controls, joysticks, levers. And then there are two empty seats, presumably one for the ghostly pilot in the left hemisphere of the brain, and his co-pilot in the right hemisphere, the ghosts in the machine.

Nobody before Descartes thought that the mind or the soul was located only in the head. The traditional view was that the soul is much more extensive, and I think we have to return to the view of the extended mind to make sense of the phenomena of our experience. To illustrate what I mean I

want to consider something so simple that it may be hard to grasp.

According to the conventional view of perception, as you see this page in front of you what happens is that light rays travel from it, form an inverted image of the page on your retina; chemical and electrical changes happen in the retina cells, nerve impulses travel up the optic nerves into the brain; patterns of activity occur in the cerebral cortex and then - by some unexplained miracle - an image of the page appears in your brain and you consciously experience it.

The fact that you see the page outside you rather than inside your head is an even more profound mystery which is simply not explained by the conventional view of perception. What I am going to suggest is that your image of the page is actually located outside your head, just where it seems to be. It is a mental image which you project out. There is a two-way flow; an inward flow of light and an outward flow of mental images.

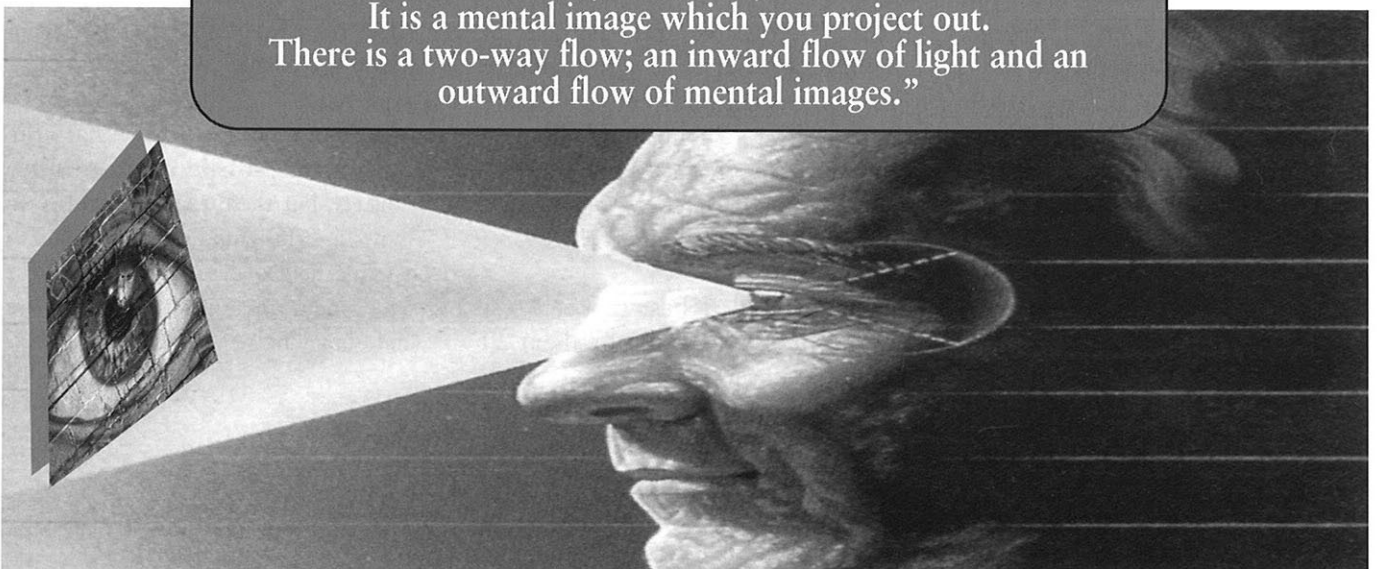
I think that what happens in perception is that in some sense our mind reaches out to touch what we are seeing. That is what children think,

that is what we experience, but we have been brought up to believe that these images are actually inside our brain.

I think our minds are extended all around us; this world is full of outwardly projected mental worlds, not just ours but also of animals. So-called primitive people, and children, and sophisticated people like Tibetans have always believed that when we see something there is an outward projection. It can't be material and it is not electro-magnetic; it is something that is not in the present scientific map of reality. And if this outward projection occurs when we look at things then it might have an effect.

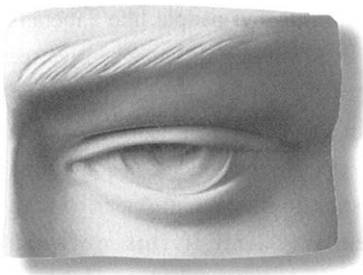
This is where such thinking becomes empirically testable: can we affect another person simply by looking at them? Can people tell they are being stared out? In fact this is a terribly common phenomenon but the odd thing is that it has been almost completely ignored by science. It has even been ignored by parapsychologists, and that is even more extraordinary. It is much more common than telepathy, spoon bending and clairvoyance and yet there has been an almost complete taboo on

"What I am going to suggest is that your image of the page is actually located outside your head, just where it seems to be. It is a mental image which you project out. There is a two-way flow; an inward flow of light and an outward flow of mental images."



research into this subject. There has been a kind of 'blind spot' for this phenomenon even among parapsychologists.

The 'Eye'



An important part of folk belief all around the world is that we can affect things by looking at them. In all cultures except our own this is taken very seriously in the beliefs and practices surrounding the 'evil eye'. In Greece, southern Italy, the Arab world, India and Africa - practically everywhere - it is believed that if you look at somewhere or something with envy or anger or malice you can blight what you look at. The look of envy is a very dangerous thing.

At the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford, are two large cases devoted entirely to amulets against the evil eye collected from all around the world; hundreds and hundreds of them. It is also believed that some people have the 'eye' more than others. They are generally feared because they can bring about effects just by looking. These beliefs were common in England too. Witches were often accused of 'overlooking' people's cattle or children and causing them to become sick.

I am not saying that if people feel they are being stared at it means they are being bewitched or that such looks always do them harm. I am just saying that this backdrop of the evil eye is, I think, the reason why even parapsychologists have fallen under a

kind of taboo against thinking about this subject.

The opposite belief is also found. Indians will travel hundreds of miles to visit holy men, or holy women, for their darshan - which literally means 'look'. It is believed that the look of a holy person confers a blessing. Thus, there is huge amount of anecdotal evidence in our own country, that people can be affected by being looked at. It is possible to devise quite simple experiments to test this.

In these experiments people work in pairs, one sitting with his or her back to the other. In a series of trials, in a random sequence, the looker either looks at the back of the subject for 20 seconds, or looks away and thinks of something else for 20 seconds. The random sequence is determined by tossing a coin before each trial: heads means look; tails means don't look. The looker indicates when a trial is beginning by a tap, click or bleep, and the subject then guesses whether he or she is being looked at or not.

Uniform mechanical clicks of electronic bleeps are better than taps because they rule out the possibility of subtle clues being transmitted through the strengths of the taps. The looker records the result, and then tells the subject whether the answer was correct or not. The looker then tosses a coin to determine what to do in the next trial. And so on.

The procedure is quite fast, and an average speed of two trials per minute is easily achieved. The results are recorded on a simple score sheet, as shown in the *Practical Details* section of my book *Seven Experiments that Could Change the World*.

I have found it best to keep test periods fairly short, up to about 20 minutes, during which time forty or more trials can be done. For statistical analysis, at least ten separate test periods are desirable, either with the same pair of people or with different pairs of people.

For those who do not perform particularly well in initial tests, it is good to practise, doing 15 to 20 minute test sessions whenever convenient. This makes it possible for a learning process akin to biofeedback to occur, whereby various subtle sensations or methods of visualisation are tried out in the attempt to find an effective way of telling when one is being looked at.

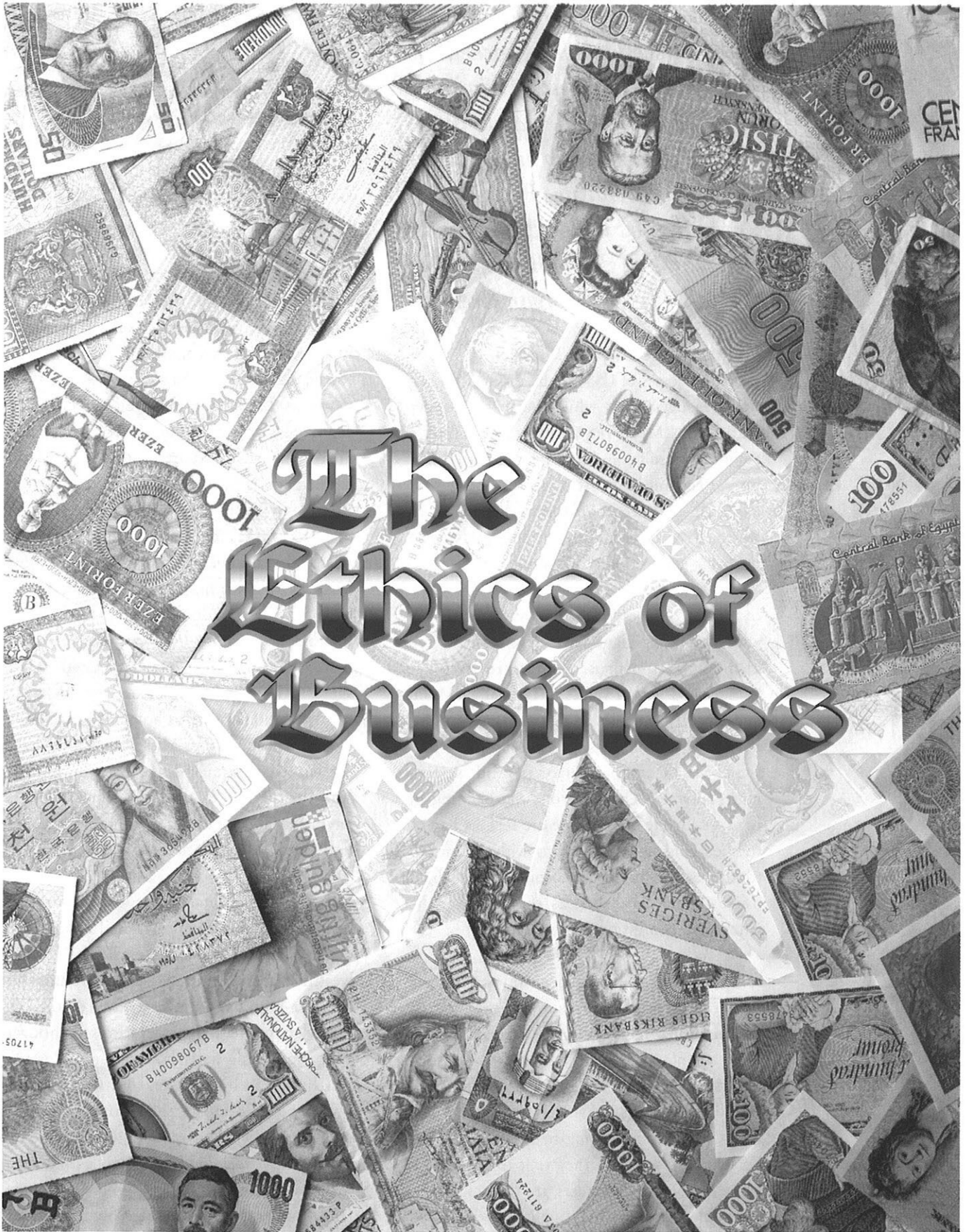
If and when sensitive subjects have been identified, many further questions can then be asked. Some straightforward examples are:

- 1) How much difference does the looker make? Are some people much more effective than others as lookers?
- 2) Does the sense of being stared at still happen when the person is looked at through a window? Does it still show up when looked at from a distance, for example through binoculars?
- 3) Does the ability to show up when the subject's reflection is looked at in a mirror?
- 4) Does this ability show up when the subject is looked at using close-circuit TV, and with the looker and the subject in separate rooms, or even in separate buildings?
- 5) How closely related is the sense of being stared at, to telepathy? Does looking at someone have a greater effect than just thinking about them without looking?

These are only a few of the experiments possible with sensitive subjects, but these examples suffice to show that this could rapidly grow into a fertile field of research. The field is wide open, and the implications are mind-boggling.

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Rupert Sheldrake is a renowned author of numerous books including *Seven Experiments That Could Change the World*.



The Ethics of Business

Profits or Prophets?

Chris Drake looks over his shoulder at the latest perceptions of moral and ethical values in commerce.

In the past two years several major scandals have rocked the world of business. These have affected high-profile names in the City of London such as centuries-old Barings Bank, which collapsed under US\$1.3 bn in debt, and the highly reputable Morgan Grenfell.

Elsewhere, the New York branch of Daiwa racked up losses of US\$1.1 bn through trading US Treasury bonds while the secret copper trades of 'Mr. Five Percent' at Japan's Sumitomo resulted in losses now put at US\$2.6 bn. Prominent politicians in India and Pakistan, and even two former Presidents of Korea, have all been given leading parts in an unending gallery of greedy rogues.

In a case of widespread fraud at German steel and engineering giant Thyssen, one of the top anti-corruption prosecutors said "We are witnessing a loss of values in Germany. Moral and ethical principles in German boardrooms have gone to the dogs the only thing that seems to matter is profits and selfish materialism." Lax controls, the bending of rules and white-collar crime are seen as having reached epidemic proportions with allegations from Australia to Alaska tarnishing household names previously seen as representing the paragon of boardroom ethics.

It appears that in some countries public intolerance of economic injustice, exploitation and dishonesty is on the verge of exploding as more people are posing ever more searching questions. Instead of listening to companies saying "trust me", individuals are telling them "show me" and wanting to see proof of the honesty and integrity they tout to the world. Likewise, corporate leaders are thinking about their obligations to staff, families, investors and the public, wondering to what extent ethical standards are involved in making money and running a successful and responsible business. Can moral and ethical principles help sort the wheat from the chaff and distinguish good money from bad? And if so, how do we know

it's not just psycho-babble or superstitious mumbo-jumbo, an unread "In God we trust" self-consciously tacked on to the back of a dollar note? When Christ threw the money-lenders out of the Temple did that signify the fall of the sacred shekeldom, the eternal excommunication of Lucre from the house of God? On 20th century planet Earth is there really such a thing as an honest buck?

Over the years there have been some clear shifts of opinion with regard to the rights and wrongs of doing business. Gone are the days when vast concerns frequently depended on forced slave labour (although even today as many as 15 million children in India are reported to be working as virtual slaves). However, the reality of today's global marketplace is such that it is easy to challenge supposedly ethical investment and point out that the world's economies are all so inter-related that no one can be whiter than white. Miss Cleanhands may think she's smart not having anything to do with Global Gunrunners Inc. but does she realise what Truly Honest Bank is doing with the money she used to buy shares in it, or even with the money she has in her Truly Honest current account? Yes, Truly Honest is lending poor Miss Cleanhands' hard earned savings straight to Global Gunrunners! And the interest that Global Gunrunners is paying to Truly Honest is going..... straight into Miss Cleanhands account!

Nevertheless, consumer power is being applied to put pressure on multinational companies, massive corporate giants typically based in a wealthier country but that take advantage of cheaper labour and infrastructure costs to locate manufacturing operations in poorer countries. One household name under the spotlight has been Nike. Workers at the factory in Indonesia that churns out 1.2 million pairs of shoes a month for Nike are on a basic daily wage of US\$2.23 while Nike icon Michael Jordan earns millions in endorsing the fancy footwear made by those humble hands. But how much does a holier-than-thou attitude benefit anyone? The paradox is that attempting to save the poor from the rich can end up preventing the poor from helping themselves. What may be a pittance for one is a living wage for another.

In recent years, at least, the idea of ethical investment came to prominence in the 1970s when the wave of anti-Vietnam war fervour extended to Americans withdrawing investment from companies involved in the war. A number of professional fund managers have since set up funds that enable members of the public to place cash with them for investment in companies chosen primarily on the basis of ethical criteria instead of just commercial ones. Now there are some US\$160 billion invested in easy conscience funds in America, and a more modest GBP1 billion or so in the UK. Managers of such funds generally avoid companies with interests in armaments, nuclear power, tobacco, alcohol or gambling.

Some companies might be favoured if they support environmental concerns, give to charitable causes, are active in the community or show greater concern for employees. While many small investors favour such an approach the first question is whether such funds can match the returns achieved by the more traditional funds. The dilemma for consumers is that evidence suggests that often they do not. Nevertheless there are people out there trying to make it work and there has been popular support for companies claiming not to sell products that are made using child labour or involve depleting the rain forests. With business increasingly taking a place at the forefront of social change, companies are in a unique position to shape and reflect public policy.

While such notions have begun to gain popularity in Europe and the USA they

never took off in the free-wheeling money-making enclaves of Asia. In Islamic countries, however, the Sharia, or Islamic law, contains a number of restrictions on how money may be made. Profits derived from alcohol and gambling are clear taboos, as is lending money subject to payment of interest, as this is seen as usury, and some authorities will even reject donations made using interest-bearing credit cards.

Modernising economies nevertheless need money and so this has given rise to the phenomenon of Islamic Banking

as gambling, massage, liquor and nightclub payments. It also offers holders benefits such as discounts on pilgrimages to Mecca.

The other side of all this is an industry that has sprung up in Europe and America in which management gurus and trainers are paid vast sums to talk to corporate executives about what often seems to be little more than plain common sense. They help companies adopt vision and mission statements and the like that often incorporate certain principles and values as part of the corporate culture.

Workers at the factory in Indonesia that churns out 1.2 million pairs of shoes a month for Nike, are on a basic daily wage of US\$2.23 while Nike icon Michael Jordan earns millions in endorsing the fancy footwear made by those humble hands.



in which funds are made available to others on condition that they be repaid without interest being charged. Ingenious solutions to the desire for a return on a risk-carrying investment include the issuing of 'Islamic securities' and banks taking a share of profits (assuming there are any) in lieu of interest. One of Malaysia's largest banks has just launched an Islamic credit card that blocks use on transactions deemed non-Islamic, such

Although it may be hard for most of us to put a value on ethics, many of these gurus seem to have no difficulty in merging profits with prophets and putting a high price on selling ethics in this way. The claim is that ethical business practices can offer a competitive advantage as they avoid losses arising from fraud and dishonesty and can lead to the building up of goodwill and a sound reputation.

While all these ideas are at least a step in the right direction there is always the problem that external regulators and trainers can be outwitted by those who do not see any reason why their activity should be restricted in such a way against their will. Far more effective therefore are limitations voluntarily observed on the basis of an understanding why they should be followed.

In reality humans are moral beings, endowed with reason, conscience and an innate understanding of primary and inalienable qualities such as justice, fairness, respect, honesty,

responsibility, integrity and compassion. These moral values are not just universal to all humanity but also universal to all human activity i.e. they are just as valid and called for in economic and commercial life as they are in personal, family and social life. In other words, the values we should express in business are the values that we aspire to in our moral and social lives.

What does this mean in practical terms? A number of things, including:

1. *The business should not involve an activity of itself immoral.*
2. *Look closely at how the business is run. On what values or principles are decisions and actions based?*
3. *What are the motives of those involved in the business? Why are they carrying it out?*
4. *Given that the business itself passes these tests, what effect does it have on people and their lives?*

When looking at the effect that business activity has, at the broadest level there may be an impact on the environment. A business that results in injury to the natural surroundings, causes excessive pollution or destroys non-renewable natural resources, with a consequent loss to humanity as a whole, therefore runs the risk of being unethical.

Next there is the society in which the business is located; what effect does the business have on those people and their lives? For example, a tourism or entertainment business may unnecessarily disturb the community in the place where the business is located because of the number of people it attracts, the times they are there or their activities so that the community as a whole suffers.

One more step closer to home are the business's customers: what effect does the activity or products sold have on them and their health and overall well-being? Then partners and investors: are they treated with honesty, responsibility and fairness? Closer still to home are staff and colleagues: are our relations with them based on respect, fairness and integrity? What about my family: what effect is my work schedule having on them and am I acting with responsibility and understanding in relation to them? Then there is my physical health: is that suffering because of the way I

for judging whether an activity is right or wrong. Many wrongful deeds are motivated by misguided altruism, or the Robin Hood syndrome. While Robin may have been giving all to the poor and deserving, and keeping nothing for himself, the fact remains that depriving someone else of their property in such a way is theft. Even if it's done in the name of a good cause, a wrong action is still a wrong action.

While there may be some complexity when applying them to individual situations, the underlying and guiding principles are therefore clear. Business

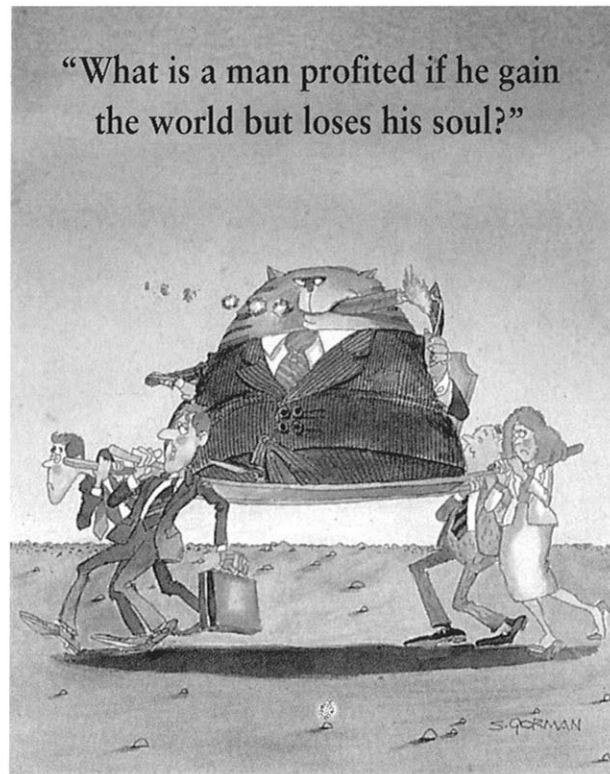
and investment should reflect ethical factors, and even in purely monetary terms, they may be more profitable in the long-term if they do so. One school of economic theory holds that prosperity comes when businesses are guided by the invisible hand of the market rather than being subjected to too many external controls and regulations.

Business people today are often motivated by fear and greed more than anything else and if pride comes before a fall then greed comes before poverty and fear before downfall. For profit with peace of mind what is now needed more than the invisible hand of the market

is the invisible hand of God, or the conscious commitment to act in accordance with moral principles. If this sounds like a novel approach it shouldn't really as it was long, long ago that St Matthew summed it all up: "What is a man profited if he gain the world but loses his soul?"

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work? And finally, what effect is the work having on my mental, emotional, moral and spiritual well-being? Am I remaining true to myself and keeping a clear conscience? What are the motivations for my action or the values or principles by which my actions are guided?

It's sometimes tempting to justify a wrong action by saying that it wasn't done with bad intentions, but motives alone are not a sufficient touchstone

THE EMERGING STORY

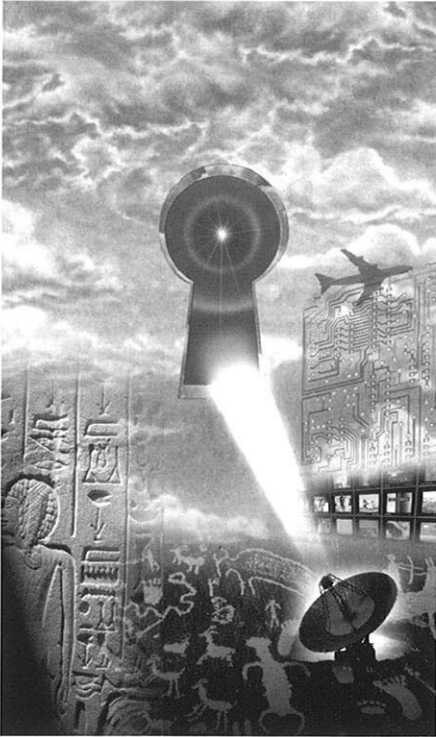
A Journey Towards a New Spirituality



'Stories' are those events and perceptions of events of the past which allow us to discern a deeper sense of meaning about what is emerging and unfolding in society now. They assist us in finding a personal sense of significance in the

overall scheme of things. John Wilson, in his presentation to the recent Global Futures Forum in Sydney, reflected on our need for new, more realistic and spiritual stories if there is going to be positive transformation.

We do need to think about our stories. We all need stories that we can believe in. Even more so when we seem to be so in-between stories at the moment as we negotiate the old and new. The old stories that used to be so powerful are clashing and merging as we reach a new globalised world. It is like stable old rivers meeting the ocean and at the mouth there is so much turbulence and uncertainty. The breakdowns in old stories, structures and forms is pushing us from the surface into something both bigger and deeper.



It is also leading to a human suffering that Thomas More calls 'the complaints of our time'. These include an emptiness, meaninglessness, vague depression, disillusionment about marriage, family and relationships, a loss of values, yearning for personal fulfilment and a hunger for spirituality. And yet on the other hand, we can sense an emerging story and that something better is unfolding.

Jungian Analyst, James Hillman, says that therapy is "a revisioning of the story into a more intelligent, more imaginative plot". To him therapy is where we re-story our lives. Perhaps, individually and collectively we are looking for some therapeutic stories that give us a sense of meaning and coherence. The task of religion is to provide stories that give more meaning to our lives. It could almost be said that the 'complaints of our time' are increasing because our present stories are not supplying the meaning that we require. So we need to look at the 'texts' and 'subtexts' of our stories. We need to re-interpret our stories and find stories that define an emerging spirituality more imaginatively (and more globally).

The stories have to guide towards a better future with hope and confidence (we cannot settle for stories that confine us too much).

Take the economic rationalist story for example. Leaving everything to the market forces in a survival of the fittest. It is just not kind. It lacks any moral guidance. One suspects that this is the story for a privileged few (the ones who are winning the economic game). When a story like this becomes too dominant it can lead to a breakdown in cohesion in our society. The rich living in enclaves protecting themselves from a marauding poor. The poor becoming increasingly disenfranchised, alienated and violent. In many ways it increases the alienation through a game of winners and losers. You either belong to the winners or you lose.

David Tacey in his book 'Edge of the Sacred' says that, "We often prefer to monitor our self-transformation through social and political terms. The myth of politics (Greek polis, the state) is the most potent myth - we love to exteriorise and project our psychic changes into the political process. We would much rather talk of a new economy, than a new openness to God and soul. And yet in this excessive exteriorisation, our spiritual story is lost, our inner transformation denied". Our new stories therefore have to embrace 'self-transformation' and the leading edge of our understanding and experience. Even more so when so many of us are disaffected with church and state. The 'plot' of our emerging stories have to include our own transformation because that is what the story is really about. We don't want to get caught in the illusory 'side scenes' of the drama when the self-transformation story holds much more interest, richness and surprise!

Another story, the 'New Age' story is a more recent phenomenon, based on some different

assumptions, but it also has its problems. It seems to get too mixed up with crystals, channelling, hugging whales and burning incense. Not that there is necessarily anything wrong with any of these things, it is just that the New Age has its own problems of exteriorisation (it can get caught up in the 'props' as well). Do we need crystals to gain personal power? (what happens when we leave them at home?) Are whales and dolphins going to lead us into the next millennium? The 'new age' for some, can also be too mono dimensional. It doesn't always seem to address the real issues and problems at any depth and can lack plausibility. Is this where the future lies? It is easy to pillory the new age story yet it is no more of a fantasy than the economic story that would have us believe that our happiness lies in increased growth and consumption.

So where does that leave us? Where to look for a new story? George Miller, Director of 'Mad Max' and 'Babe' said that the best stories are heroic journeys: "They are basically individuals drawn into an adventure, first of all reluctantly, travelling an unknown landscape and having their courage tested. Ultimately if they pass the tests they become the agents of change". The essential 'plot' then, in these stories is about self sovereignty. The journey towards our own completion. There is something deeper and much more humane in these stories. They involve more of our interior life. They are universal, whilst still looking in through the window of a 'transformational' journey.

The narrative here is on drawing on all of our inner strengths and powers to fight the enemies of fear, negativity, cynicism, anger, rising above our situations and circumstances, facing our own demons and achieving victory. They put responsibility right back on the individual and their own transformational journey.

I would like to put forward 3 areas to explore in a story that may unfold to provide a context for the transition we are moving through. These are aimed at addressing some of the problems of the old stories and could be the foundations of a preferred story for the future.

(1) A return to self sovereignty

The assumption of responsibility has to shift towards 'self' as distinct from state and institution. With a focus on personal authority and less expectations on Governments and external institutions. A move to a form of 'self-referencing' as Deepak Chopra calls it. A shift from an external frame of reference to a more internal frame of reference. The key to a better future is in highly-developed people with the personal power to participate in and lead change. These new people will have to be equipped with a range of personal powers to deal with a range of situations. They will have the 'self experience' that strengthens the emotional competence to deal with a demanding, contradictory and conflicting world. The identity of self will be more based on 'original' qualities and powers and less on original sin. This will require that we become less doctrinal and more experiential.

(2) Bring God back to our cosmos

The search for a coherent bigger picture has to be 'theistic'. The new stories are linked with the original stories, with God at the origin. This could require seeing God, less as a creator of this world in any physical sense, and more the creator as 'the holder of the story', 'the dispeller of dark images', the 'knower of past, present and future', 'teller of the deep secrets of the story'.

A God that addresses the meaninglessness of a contemporary life by liberating the deep story of

people. A 'director' who can draw out an original and authentic performance from the actors by giving them a deep sense of their own unique 'parts' in an unlimited world drama. If we have the *ëightsí* of self sovereignty we will also need to have the 'responsibilities' of serving a greater good. Even self-sovereigns need to be obedient to a bigger story. Most of our flawed modern heroes seem to be isolated outcasts intent on revenge rather than co-creators motivated by service.

(3) Re-Establish a sense of 'right relationship'

By regaining a sense of right relationship between soul, God and home we can address the source of the alienation and disillusionment at the core of our present problems. A 'homelessness' is at the heart of much of our contemporary unease. Only through a sense of belonging to God can we ease our existential longing. Through re-establishing the first relationships of soul and God and home we can re-establish a sense of right relationship in our outer world. The deep ecology that we seek in our outer world is founded in spirituality. The real economy (Greek, *oikos* - home) of prosperity and abundance is deeply linked our first spiritual attitudes, outlooks and relationships.

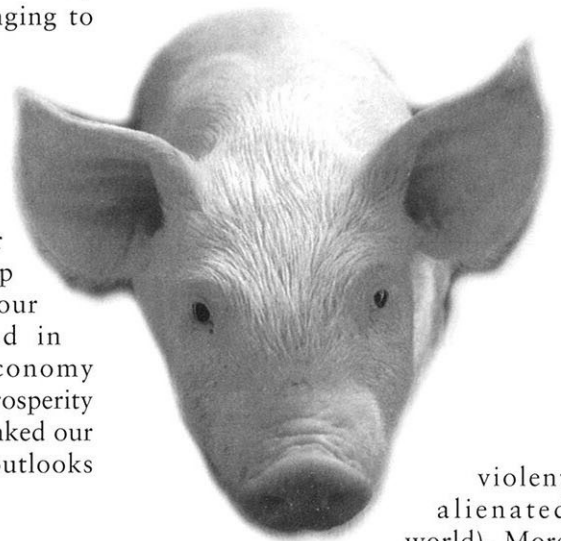
Self-sovereignty is one thing but it is only the starting point to lead to a greater sense of connectedness which is after all what we all crave (and miss in our present societies).

These areas of an emerging religious story transcend distinctions of Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu etc and move towards a religion that focuses on the core shared values of the soul rather than competing interests and ideologies. They focus more towards the essence of our shared heroic spiritual journey and less towards the outer artefacts and

ideological differences of our traditional religious stories.

Implicit in all of this is our ability to bring about self transformation. The emphasis will need to be towards an introspective know 'thysel' type of wisdom and the personal power to bring it into action. Some form of meditation is required. In the new spirituality the depth of our experience is more important than the 'costumes', 'sets', 'props' and 'special effects'. The primacy of self sovereignty gives power back to the individual where it belongs. The religion is of self sovereignty. The celebration is where the inner capabilities and powers match the external challenges. Where we carry around the sacred wherever we walk.

The new story is more like 'Babe' (the story of a little pig who thought he could be something better) than 'Mad Max' (a tribal,



violent alienated world). More like 'Babe' than 'Ben Hur' (the big religious spectacle). And definitely more like 'Babe' than 'Wall St' (and the greed is good story). The emerging religious story is mostly about ordinary people transforming their lives. There are no shortage of dark images of the future, what is more challenging is the development of positive, powerful, possible, and plausible futures.

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John Wilson is the author of Self Management Strategies

THE MASTER POWERS

The Foundation Course in Meditation Part VII



During the past six sessions you have been rediscovering who you are, where you are and the nature of spiritual relationship. You are a soul, you are consciousness, you are light, you are spiritual energy. But are you in control of that energy? Are you in control of your self? Are you self-empowered?

The energy of your consciousness is your personal power. Are you the master of that power? When you are, you will use your power to shape your responses to people and the world around you. When you take responsibility for your ability to respond you are able, at will, to use your power in many ways. These are just eight different but important ways in which you will demonstrate your self-mastery.

**THE POWER TO
Withdraw**
*... is the ability to disengage
from the world around you*

With almost constant focus on other people and external events we have allowed our habits and personalities to be shaped by the changing world around us. We have come to depend on our physical, sensual experience to stimulate fleeting moments of happiness. Sustained inner peace seems impossible. Invite a changing, chaotic world in and your inner world will be the same. The first step in restoring calm and finding internal focus is to withdraw attention away from everything external. Disengage from the world around you. Tortoises are good at this as they pull head and arms and legs inside their shell. Can you do this with your senses? It helps if you value periods of solitude and introversion. Time to reflect and be quiet. It means leaving your senses behind for a few moments, minutes, maybe half an hour in a day. This is also the first step of personal mastery. If you are not the master of your senses and all incoming stimuli, you will be their slave.

**THE POWER TO
Pack up**
*... is the ability to stop
wasteful thinking*

Once fully inside you will be met by the second challenge of mastering your self: a racing chattering mind, an analytical intellect with an endless queue of questions and an ever gurgling memory, throwing up images and experiences from the past. Here at the heart of your consciousness are your three most valuable servants. Unfortunately, however, they are servants who have come to enjoy too much freedom, and they now take turns to be master of you. The power and the ability to pack up is simply the ability to control your mind, your intellect and your memories. This should not be a battle, for battles are with enemies, and the energy of resistance can strengthen an enemy more than weaken it. This is a time to make friends and elevate your servants to be more like your ministers, your inner cabinet. Encourage your mind to take a break, time out for a holiday. Shut down the production line for an hour and rest. Pack up and come home. Make quietness a luxury and indulge yourself. When your intellect, your ever-enquiring, examining, analytical intellect asks you why it should also be quiet, still and patient, help it to understand that the understanding it seeks only comes when it listens and observes, not when it questions and searches. Invite it to relax and just watch the movie!

And when those trains of thought come racing out of your memory into your new-found quietness, just let them come and let them go. Refuse to

get on the trains and they will soon slow down and become less frequent. And so with the mastery of the faculties of your consciousness restored you can return to your throne your the centre with total self-respect and a sense of integrity (integratedness) within yourself. You packed up. Perhaps only for a few minutes to start. But it's a start. Make it more minutes tomorrow. And don't forget, masters are not autocratic tyrants. Real mastery is based on servant leadership. In other words, serve your mind, care for your intellect, respect and value your experiences as if they were your teachers, and they will return the service a hundred-fold.

**THE POWER TO
Tolerate**
*... is the ability not to be
affected by external and
internal events and to
respond to those events
positively*

There is no pleasure in disturbance. If you disturb the peace on the street you could be fined. You've broken a law. If your peace is disturbed inside, there is also a penalty to pay; we call it pain. It could be mental or emotional. The power of tolerance is the ability to be undisturbed by any event going on around you and within you. It's an ability that comes with ease when you stay on your internal throne and just observe. You are involved and yet detached at the same time.

Tolerance is necessary when you fully engage with those situations and people around you and they say and do things which stimulate buried negative memories and emotions.

First you have to tolerate your own inner reactions and that is only possible when you can consciously disengage and detach from the thoughts and feelings accompanying your reactions. Remember, you are not your thoughts and feelings, they are your creation.

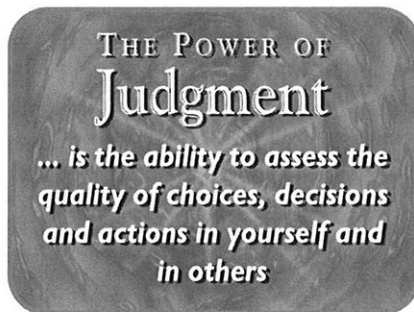
When tolerating others it helps to remind yourself you are simply watching a massive drama going on around you. The greatest production in movie history and nothing in the script can disturb you. In fact your role is a vital one. Not only to tolerate and transform your own reactions, but to tolerate the actions of others by accepting their energy, and returning a higher quality of energy as you return a blessing in the face of insult, acceptance in the face of rejection, love in the face of hate. Masters are transformers.



‘Accommodation to Let’ is a sign most people seek at least once in their lives. At a spiritual level, and in the context of our relationships, we learn to accommodate or to evict. My simple acknowledgment of your presence is my first gesture of accommodation as I ‘let’ you into my universe. We seek others who will ‘let’ us ‘accommodate’ ourselves in them. Will you put up with me is not too far from will you put me up!

The ability to accommodate others is a major challenge today. It means accepting and going with someone else’s flow, working with other’s ideas. It means expanding yourself to allow

someone else in who may in a clumsy moment trample all over you. It requires a kind of fearlessness, or ‘you can’t hurt me’ understanding before you will mould and shape yourself to allow a situation to develop naturally or a person to make their demands upon you. How far will your capacity expand? How many can you put up with in your house and in your heart? Without demanding any rent.



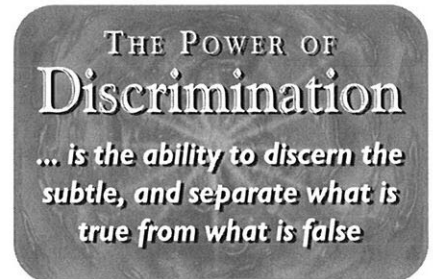
Having returned to your inner throne to rediscover the power and ability to expand your capacity to tolerate and accommodate anyone or any situation, you are now in a position to make judgments. Not judgment of others, because no-one has that right.

Real, authentic, accurate judgment has three dimensions. You judge or assess a situation so you may be able to see what is the correct response you need to create and express.

You don’t judge people, but you do judge their actions. Perhaps for rightness or quality, for ethic or value, because you are an eternal student and seek to continually learn from others. But you have no need to judge any person for you know they are innately good, even though their actions may demonstrate otherwise.

And then you judge yourself. Not with the aim to punish, but simply to assess and see that your thoughts, words and actions are consistently of the highest quality and finding acceptance from others. All this you

cannot do accurately unless you are able to withdraw and restore inner power, pack up and put a full stop to wasteful thinking, tolerate the emergence of any negative feelings and accommodate the ideas, desires, actions and presence of others.

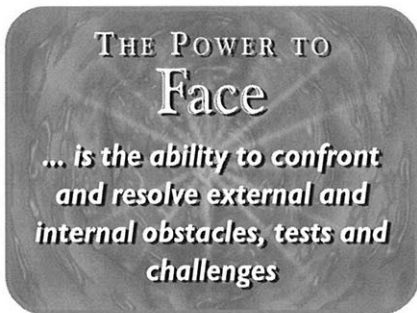


Discrimination is not born of prejudice and segregation. It is the art of seeing. Not seeing with physical eyes, but seeing with the inner eye, the third eye. Seeing what is true and what is false. Today it is possible to create an artificial diamond which looks and directs light as well as the real thing. To you and me there is no difference. To an experienced and unhurried jeweller however, the subtle flaws are noticed through the eye of experience and knowledge. And so it is with right and wrong, with good and bad, and the whole spectrum which lies in between.

Spiritual sight is like the jeweller’s eye. Seeing what is true is only possible when there is an understanding of the laws and principles which govern the course of human life. It is knowledge of these laws of nature, both physical and spiritual, which restore sight and give you the ability to discriminate.

Only then can the illusions of superficial beauty and falsehood parading as truth, be dispelled. Only then will quantity of time and action (doing) be balanced by quality time and effective activity (being). Only then will those things of temporary value (material) be perceived and separated from those of eternal value (spiritual). Without the development

of this inner ability to discriminate it is likely that your journey will be a path of many dead ends and frequent mistakes. Masters know exactly where they are going and seldom make the same mistake twice.



The spiritual journey home is a return to full awareness of what is true and what is right. But there are numerous obstacles, tests and challenges on the way.

It is only with your inner strength restored by knowledge and spiritual power from the source that you are able to face and deal with the inner dragons that rear their heads during the journey. This is the symbology of the saints - the slaying of dragons, not with armour and sword on some country field, but with the sword of truth as they engage the false beliefs, illusions and bad habits which they have adopted, created or consumed during many lives.

In meditation you take that step inside and get to know yourself again. In this process you see your thoughts, your habits, your beliefs as well as your talents and your beauty. You learn to discern right from wrong and you recover the strength to face the obstacles which come from inside and out. Internal obstacles are old habits of behaviour born out of false understanding and wrong beliefs. External obstacles are those who would deliberately stand in your path of change - wanting you to stay the same. Tests come when you meet those who yesterday triggered fear or hate within. Can you face them, walk

towards them, see their beauty, their quality however deeply hidden and respond to that. Tests can come in the silence of your meditation as you allow ancient images and feelings to emerge from a deep and distant past. Horror, terror, or simply error will test the strength of your ability to look at them in the face, forgive yourself and move on.

And challenges. Every moment on this journey home is a challenge, and masters thrive on challenges. There are no problems, only opportunities to learn, grow, and help others in the process. There is no such thing as failure, only feedback. Change and chaos are travelling companions. And there is no other time than the present. The mantra of the master is just face it, just face it right now. Masters know that delay is expensive.



Co-operation is more than just lending a helping hand to your fellow man or woman. That is important but real co-operation comes from the deeper spaces of attitude, feeling, thought and vision.

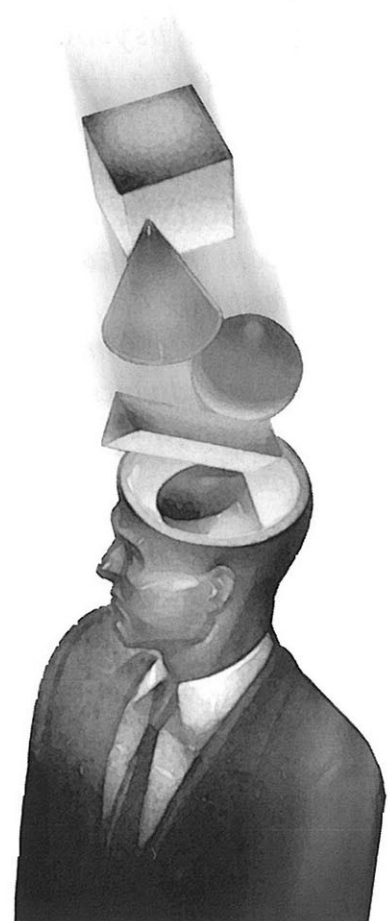
Simply to see someone's highest qualities of character and not their weakness is an act of co-operation. The offering of powerful subtle thoughts towards the success of another is invisible but priceless co-operation. The generation and generous sprinkling of good feelings when friend or foe are down is selfless co-operation. And a constantly positive attitude regardless of the size of the perceived disaster is the

inspiration of uplifting co-operation.

To accept, acknowledge and appreciate another is to co-operate with their journey, thus providing the fuel of encouragement.

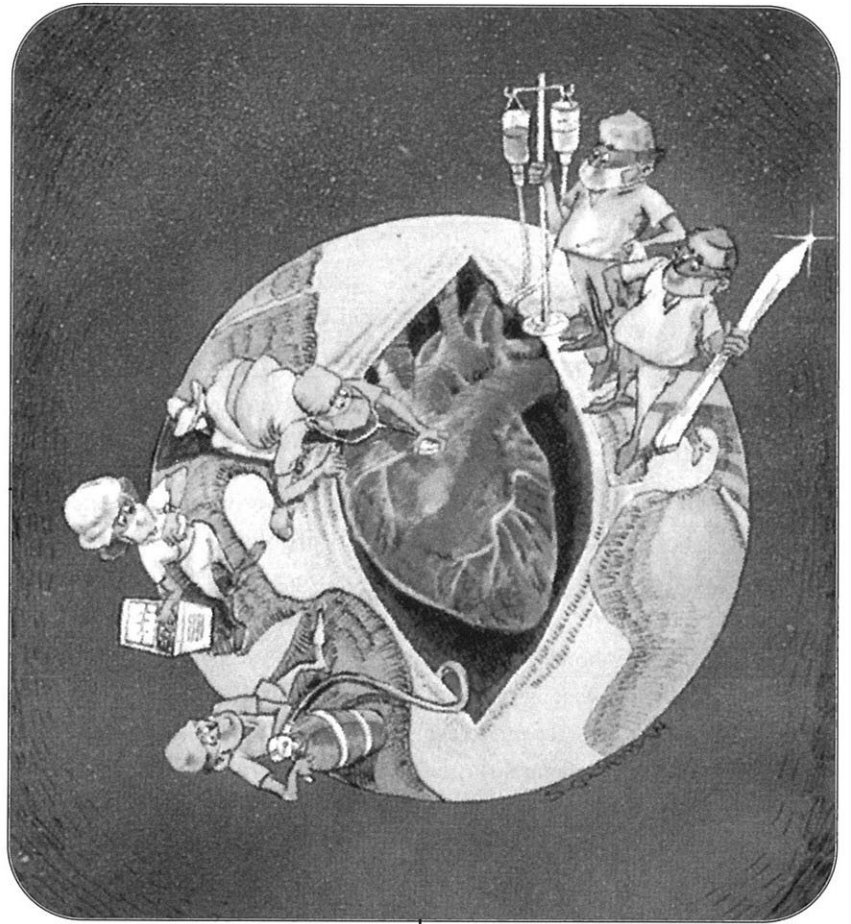
Co-operation is the fabric of unity, the song of harmony and the only way in which we all prosper together. And as Benjamin Franklin once said, "if we don't hang together, we will surely hang separately". ®

*The Foundation Course in Meditation is taught at all Brahma Kumaris Centres worldwide. If you would like to find the nearest centre to you, or would like copies of this series of articles on the Course please send a stamped addressed envelope to:
The Editor, Retreat Magazine, Global Co-operation House, 65 Pond Lane, London NW10 2HH*



Thoughts on the Omega Point

Stephen Fulder
challenges some
common assumptions.



It is deeply ingrained into the Western psyche that there is such a thing as 'human advancement'. This is held by most people to be physical and material advancement, and those who are spiritually inclined mostly assume some kind of spiritual advancement is occurring in parallel. Intelligence must triumph.

I have no idea if humans are more or less advanced than at other times. It seems a very subjective assessment, depending on each person's interpretation of history. It implies a linear view of time; it indicates that there is a place to go. These assumptions are deeply held by the Western psyche. They are constructed out of an even deeper assumption of an irrevocable loss

of Paradise, which man is ever trying to struggle back to. The growth of science and so called human progress itself can be seen as adjustment to this sense of loss and alienation. An alternative view is that we are always in Paradise, but are dancing so hard, in the dance of Maya, that we can't see it. In this view the very notion of human advancement, the 'becoming' in the words of Krishnamurti, is based on wanting to be somewhere else which is an actual obstacle to spiritual awareness.

It might be worth while to look again at some of these anthropocentric assumptions. The first is that because man has developed technically and culturally, his awareness must have also increased. But this is not self-evident. Though modern man may sit at a computer, I doubt whether anyone could prove that the total

amount of information that he has to process is greater than that of an aboriginal who would perceive and remember an immense amount of data on every rock, every plant, every tree, every animal, each of which are seen and recorded as an individual identity. I have seen Bedouin trackers follow a man two hours after he passed, by such clues as a slight bending of a couple of blades of grass, and a six year old Bedouin boy herding a huge flock of goats, in which he understands and can predict the unique behaviour of each one of them. In India, it is recorded that Brahmins used to face an examination of the quality of their attention called the 'eight attentions'. The Brahmin would sit playing chess with one person, while having a theological disputation with other, in the midst of telling a long epic poem to a third, while a fourth is trying to disturb and interrupt by inane comments. Meanwhile a bell is run

randomly in his ear and petals are thrown on his back. Two more people involve him in other tasks. As the end of the session he must know how many petals were thrown on his back. Who in modern times can compete in terms of attention, perception, memory and cognition? If one claims that modern man is superior in terms of his ability to model reality through abstract thought, I question that too. Predicting the patterns of behaviour and development of humans and animals, trees and the weather, require a great deal of model making and meta-model making. The great myths and the greatest books were all written ages ago. So has there been real inner progress to match the outer progress?

An associated assumption is that the human awareness has developed so rapidly and to such an extent that spiritual awareness is also nearer. Because we are on the verge of the 'information superhighway', we are also on the verge of a spiritual superhighway. This is, of course, easier to question. Most spiritual teachers would tell us that we are at a nadir not a zenith, though prospects look good from down here in the pit of materialism. It can't get any worse! Thus Buddhist texts tell us that there will be 5,000 years from Buddha Gautama to Buddha Maitrya, with the worse part in the middle, most distant from both. That is now. The Jewish tradition would go along with that. God's presence, namely the Shekinah, left mankind about the same time as Buddha's passing, and the gift of Prophecy also went; Judaism can only look back or forward to the Messiah. Taoism looks back to the Ancestral Sages, Christianity acknowledges its current Slough of Despond, and so on. Surely the Age of Aquarius is a beginning not an end. We have a very long way to go.

Then it is assumed that electronic communications and modern technology has brought us closer to the 'Global Mind'. But one could say that the more communication there is, the fewer interesting things there are to communicate about. If you analyse the content of this global electronic chatter it might make you feel that the global brain was empty. The Teilhardian 'noosphere' is surely about reaching a panoramic awareness, a cosmic consciousness, not about instantly having reports on the Hong Kong stock market.

Then a disastrous assumption. It is assumed that the ecological and environmental situation man finds himself in is a 'problem' that modern man, with his technology and obvious superior capability, can solve in much the same way as it was created. It is regarded as an unfortunate side effect of civilisation, which civilisation can repair given enough cash. However it is evident that the ecological problem is the result of an essentially distorted relationship which is deeply culturally determined. It is a consequence of the divided and fragmented consciousness of modern man which no amount of recycling can cure. Is it the case that modern man has an advanced consciousness, the end result of an ever more rapid evolutionary

process, but has made a few recent ecological mistakes? Or is it the case that modern man's consciousness has regressed to such an extent that he is on the way to destroying the world that made him? Is the measure of an advanced consciousness a harmonious relationship with total reality? By this measure almost all earlier peoples whose relationships with the environment are intimate and undivided could be seen as more advanced than modern man.

Finally we come to the view that modern man must keep on developing in much the same way, more and more rapidly, and he will eventually reach the 'omega point' of Teilhard de Chardin, a period of blissful global realisation. It is hard to envisage that 'more of the same' technological skills will cure the sickness of the environment and of man himself. The direction will need to be entirely different. A dive into the ocean. The 'Omega Point' can be reached by 'the action of silence', in the words of Krishnamurti, not the noise of artificial intelligence.

Stephen Fulder is a writer, lecturer and consultant in the field of alternative medicine and natural remedies. He has written 11 books, both academic and popular in these fields, including the classic text *"The Handbook of Complementary Medicine"*, published by Oxford University Press.

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HOW DOES SANTA DO IT?

Secret enquiry fails to find Santa



In a leaked report from an international committee of researchers looking into the whereabouts and well-being of Santa Claus, the conclusions for the world's children are not good this Christmas Eve. Many of the scientists doing the research were reluctant to participate in the project fearing damage to Santa's reputation and status in the eyes of the world's children.

These are some of the most damaging facts taken from the leaked document.

1. No known species of reindeer can fly. However, there are some 300,000 species of living organisms yet to be classified, and while most of these are insects and germs this does not completely rule out the possibility of flying reindeer which only Santa has seen.

2. A random search through some of the hundreds of thousands of letters sent through the Post Office revealed many addressed to Mrs. S. Claus. Scientists were unsure however if Santa was actually female or many children were fed up sitting on the knees of grumpy old men who annually imitate Santa across the country in department stores.

3. There are approximately 2 billion children (persons under 18) in the world. However, since Santa doesn't appear to handle the Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist children, that reduces the workload to 15% of the total, or 378 million according to the Population Reference Bureau. At an average (census) rate of 3.5 children per household, and presuming there is at least one good child in each home, the report estimates Santa has to make a staggering 91.8 million home visits.

4. Santa has 31 hours of Christmas to work with, thanks to the different time zones and the rotation of the earth, assuming he travels east to west (which seems logical). This works out to 822.6 visits per second which means that for each Christian household with good children, Santa has 1/1000th of a second to park, hop out of the sleigh, jump down the chimney, fill the stockings, distribute the remaining presents under the tree, eat whatever snacks have been left, get back up the chimney, get back into his sleigh and move on to the next house. Assuming that each of these 91.8 million stops are evenly distributed around the earth (which of course we know to be false but for our purposes of our calculations we will accept) Santa will have to travel about .78 miles between each household, a total trip of 75.5 million miles, not counting stops to do what most of us do at least once every 31 hours, plus feeding etc. This means that Santa's sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second, 3,000 times faster than the speed of sound. For the purposes of comparison, the fastest man-made vehicle on earth, the Ulysses space probe, moves at a poky 27.4 miles per second - while a conventional reindeer can reach a top speed of around 15 miles per hour.

5. The payload on the sleigh adds another interesting element. Assuming that each child gets nothing more than a medium-sized lego set (2 pounds) the sleigh is carrying 321,300 tons, not counting Santa, who has invariably been described as overweight. On land, conventional reindeer can pull no more than 300 pounds. Even granting that flying reindeer could pull ten times the normal amount, the job cannot be done with eight, or even nine, in fact 214,263 reindeer are required. This increases the payload - not even counting the weight of the sleigh - to approximately 353,430 tons. Again, for comparison, this is roughly four times the weight of the Queen Elizabeth.

6. 353,430 tons travelling at 650 miles per second creates enormous air resistance - this will heat the reindeer up in the same fashion as the spacecraft re-entering the earth's atmosphere. The lead pair of reindeer will absorb 14.3 Quintillion joules of energy. Per second. Each. In short, they will burst into flame almost instantaneously, exposing the reindeer behind them, and creating deafening sonic booms in their wake. The entire reindeer team will be vaporised within 4.26 thousands of a second. Santa, meanwhile, will be subjected to centrifugal forces 17,200.06 times greater than the earth's gravity. A 250 pound Santa (which seems ludicrously slim) would be pinned to the back of his sleigh by 4,315,015 pounds of force.

The conclusion of this devastating report is that if Santa ever did deliver presents on Christmas Day, he's dead now. However, science is increasingly getting it wrong these days, so do watch your chimney this Christmas eve... but don't hold your breath!





Are you aware? Do you understand?

There are three kinds of laws. Man made laws, natural physical laws and eternal spiritual laws. The laws made by men and women are designed to restore and maintain harmony in society. The other laws already exist. Gravity reminds you that you must keep both feet on the ground, otherwise you'll come down with a bump.

While you may break the laws of society it is impossible to break physical and spiritual laws. If you try, pain will be the result - physical pain when you attempt to break the law of gravity and mental or emotional pain when you try to break the laws of spirit.

Even the absence of meaning and purpose in your life will be an indication that you are attempting to break a deep spiritual law.

Just as a piece of coal is transformed into a diamond by a combination of the laws of gravity and heat exchange, so human consciousness, the soul, is shaped by many spiritual laws - including the laws of love, of time, of relationship, of silence.

In fact the soul is not separate from spiritual law. In the moment of awareness of any law, it is that law. The difference between a piece of coal and human consciousness is the coal has no choice, no awareness. It does not seek understanding. Whereas we, you, all souls have a choice. The choice is yours. Are you aware? Do you understand?

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Between the 'I's



*My Super-duper guru
His whole life taught through looks;
And as he never, never spoke
His Word's beyond all books.*

*I used to go up to his cave
To gaze into his eyes
And in them, there reflected,
I always saw two 'I's.*

*I saw there Love and Laughter
And Wisdom and surprise,
But clearly, too, reflected
I always saw two 'I's.*

*My super-duper guru
Was full of Joy and wise
And though he never spoke one word
Yet still I saw two 'I's.*

*For years he saw my puzzlement,
For years he heard my sighs,
For years I knew that he knew too
That I was still two 'I's.*

*His Patience was unfailing;
He'd never criticise,
But shone with light to see the fight
Going on between my 'I's.*

*And as the years and years passed by
I came to realise
That every living guru
Eventually dies.*

*When last I gazed upon his face
And saw that he must die,
He very slowly winked at me
And closed one laughing eye.*

*Only then did I perceive
In his one open eye
There was no alter ego
And I was wholly I.*

*In all-embracing Silence
My guru passed away
And now my Eye is single
I see as clear as day.*

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